



LETTERS TO HIS FRIENDS WRITTEN BY

Sincerely,

Put

LT. COLONEL RUSSELL L. PUTMAN



CANADA

UNITED STATES

NEW YORK

WASHINGTON

MIAMI

SAN DOMINGO

TRINIDAD

SO. AMERICA

NEW FOUNDLAND

AZORES

ATLANTIC

OCEAN

NATAL

GLASGOW

LONDON

DIJON

LYON

MARSAILLES

ORAN

ALGIER

CASA BLANCA

MARRAKECH

AFRICA

DAKAR

MONROVIA

ACCRA





















Sincerely,

Put







C-60

★ United States of America ★ Dominican  
Republic ★ Trinidad ★ Venezuela ★ British  
Guiana ★ Dutch Guiana ★ French Guiana  
Brazil ★ Senegal ★ Sierra Leone ★ Liberia  
Ivory Coast ★ Gold Coast ★ Nigeria ★ Sudan  
Egypt ★ Cirenaica ★ Tripolitania ★ Tunisia  
Algeria ★ Morocco ★ Palestine ★ Trans Jordan  
The Lebanon ★ Syria ★ Iraq ★ Iran ★ Saudi  
Arabia ★ Baluchistan ★ India ★ Burma ★ China  
Sicily ★ Italy ★ Corsica ★ Sardinia ★ Azores  
Canada ★ Newfoundland ★ Ireland ★ Scotland  
Wales ★ England ★ Alsace ★ France ★



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LT. COLONEL RUSSELL L. PUTMAN

PUBLISHED IN AUTUMN, NINETEEN FORTY-FIVE



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S11  
P92

**To: HOLOBEIN**

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(Maps and interpretative sketches by P. G. Napolitano)



## COLONEL PUTMAN'S LETTERS

By LT. COLONEL MERLE ARMITAGE

World War II will be recorded as the most articulate military struggle in history. With the exception of certain Russian campaigns, every major and minor battle on land, sea, and in the air has been chronicled by writers for the newspaper, magazine, and book readers of the world. Newsreels and feature pictures have reached millions in theaters . . . radio listeners in their homes have been surfeited by direct battle reports, news commentators, analysts, etc. Every aspect of war and its concomitant activities, factual, actual, psychological, and metaphysical, have been thoroughly examined, reported, and commented upon. No one person could read but a fragment of this coverage . . . no mind could grasp the gigantic proportions and ramifications of this colossal strife.

Possibly this is the reason why letters written by actual participants often conveyed more of the smell, feel, and look of strange combat theaters than have the correspondents, the commentators, and the experts.

Colonel Putman, as time permitted, wrote to his friends. Sometimes he wrote in military aircraft thousands of feet above the Mediterranean, or Burma, or France. Often he set up his portable typewriter in some headquarters barracks . . . just back from some particularly exciting experience . . . and wrote it down just as he then vividly remembered it. One or two of the letters are retrospective . . . but they lose none of their pungency and colorful narration. These letters are unpretentious . . . the Colonel was not aiming at literary style or perfection . . . but he gives us a picture . . . seen through the eyes of an alert and understanding American . . . with a simplicity and force which the experts too often failed to convey. It is good, sound, middle-western reporting . . . unbiased, keen, and with an eye for the thing which would interest most Americans. Colonel Putman takes you there . . . you are with him . . . seeing, tasting, and learning . . . and gaining a particularly healthy respect for your native land. Unfortunately, I was not on Colonel Putman's mailing list, but chanced on the whole series at the home of friends. Receiving these letters at intervals must have given many people the pleasure of a ringside seat, but the impact of reading them at one sitting suggested the possibility of placing them all between covers in a book.

Here they are, then, with no editing which would dilute or rob them of their spontaneity and freshness of viewpoint . . . and in designing this volume, I have aimed at a parallel dignity and simplicity in typography and format. They document one of the significant phases of World War II, in a vast area of continuing importance in international affairs.

# PHOTO - LOG

**Note:** Some of the following photographs were taken under difficult conditions . . . many are naturally somewhat travel worn. The censor's stamp, unfortunately, did not always add to the effectiveness of result.







To Put:  
 With best regards  
 and memories of many  
 happy flights  
 Ralph Royce  
 Major General USAF

**Major General Ralph Royce.** Formerly Commanding General, United States Army Forces in the Middle East; Deputy Commanding General, Ninth Air Force; Commanding General, First Tactical Air Force (Prov.). Now Commanding General, Army Air Forces Personnel Distribution Command.

Colonel Putman meets King Farouk of Egypt, introduced by General Royce. Behind King Farouk stands Major General Ibrahim Atallah Pasha, Chief of Staff of Egypt's Army.

[ 2





"We took King Farouk flying . . . in a C-54. The King was as enthusiastic as any American could be. And when he was invited into the pilot's seat, he was completely happy." (See page 60.)

Original from  
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



King Farouk greets Major George C. Van Nostrand . . . the huge C-54 in the background. General Atallah Pasha is seated with the King . . . Minister Kirk stands beneath a propeller . . . Commander Atif, Naval Aide to the King, has his back to camera in left foreground.

[ 4





General Royce explains some of the C-54's mechanism to King Farouk. General Atallah Pasha and an Egyptian newspaper editor look on.

King Farouk enjoys driving his own jeep. With him here, in the shadow of a C-54's tail assembly, are General Royce, Minister Kirk, and General Atallah Pasha.







General Ibrahim Atallah Pasha, Chief of Staff, Egyptian Army, and his Staff inspect an American flying field in Egypt, escorted by Major General Ralph Royce. Colonel Robert Smith, C. O. of the field, is at left, next to bottom.



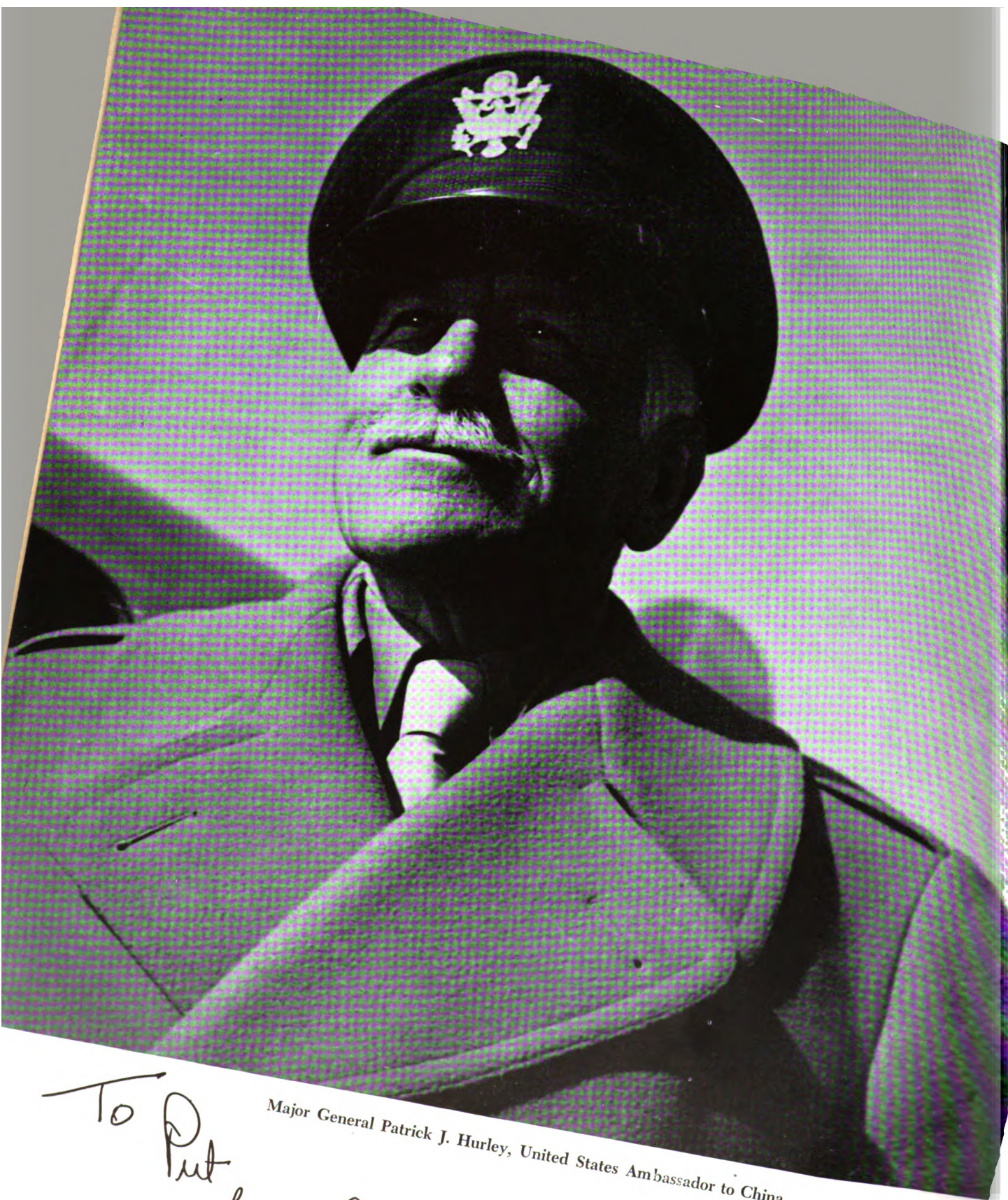
... of The Hellenes and U. S. Ambassador MacVeagh. We took them on an inspection trip  
of one of our large bases and a great airport near Cairo.





Brazilian Ambassador Barboza-Carneiro enjoys a good after-dinner story with General Royce and Colonel Putman. Cairo. (See page 92.)





Major General Patrick J. Hurley, United States Ambassador to China.

[ 10

To Put  
From Pat Cairo Feb 11<sup>th</sup> 1944



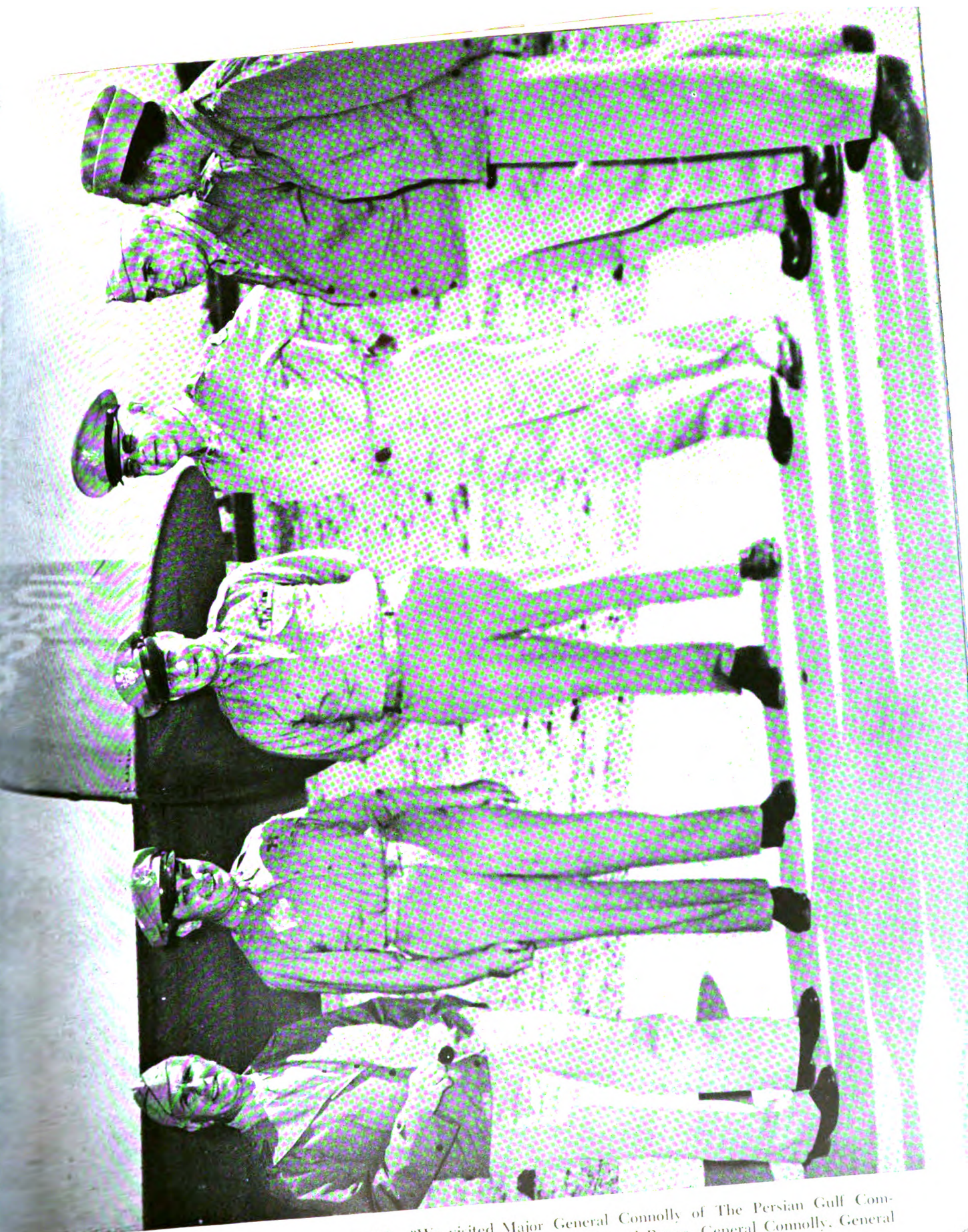
General Hurley slept here

11  
"I had two plaques made . . . one inscribed 'The General Hurley Room,' the other, 'General Hurley Slept Here' . . . the General was flabbergasted . . . we horsed him about being the 'Modern George Washington.'" (See page 115.)

Original from  
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN







13  
Teheran, Iran . . . September 1943. "We visited Major General Connolly of The Persian Gulf Command." Left to right . . . Colonel Brown, Colonel Putman, General Royce, General Connolly, General Russell, General Scott.







15] **Cairo Conference . . . The Military.** With Chiang Kai-shek, Roosevelt, and Churchill are: General Arnold, General Somervell, General Marshall, Field Marshal John Dill, Air Chief Marshal Portal, Admiral Leahy, Admiral King, Admiral Cunningham, General Brooke, Admiral Mountbatten, General Shan Chen, General Stilwell, General Ling Wei, and General de Wiart.

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Cairo Conference. Front row, left to right: Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, President Roosevelt, Prime Minister Churchill, Madame Chiang Kai-shek. Rear: Anthony Eden, John G. Winant, Dr. Wang Chung-Hui, R. G. Casey, Lord Killearn, Alexander Kirk, Averell Harriman, Harry Hopkins.





Generalissimo and Madame Chiang Kai-shek pay a visit to the Sphinx and The Pyramids. General Chennault is at left . . . General Royce, in light uniform at right, partially hides the Madame. Back of Sphinx head in background. Cairo Conference. December 1943.

Cairo Conference. Madame Chiang Kai-shek gets a ride in an American jeep driven by a British Army Sergeant. The Generalissimo, in sun helmet, stands at left behind jeep.







"We took pictures of the Joint Chiefs of Staff." Cairo Conference, December 1943. Note "The Shadow"  
... Colonel Putman supervises preparations for picture taking, silhouetted in window at rear, left.  
General Marshall's chair is vacant.

Original from

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

...ives on Joint Chiefs of Staff. Cairo Conference, December 1943. Left to right . . .  
are General Arnold, General Marshall, Admiral Leahy, Admiral King. "The Shadow" is in the back-  
ground. (Center, U. S. Navy Captain; right, U. S. Army Colonel.)

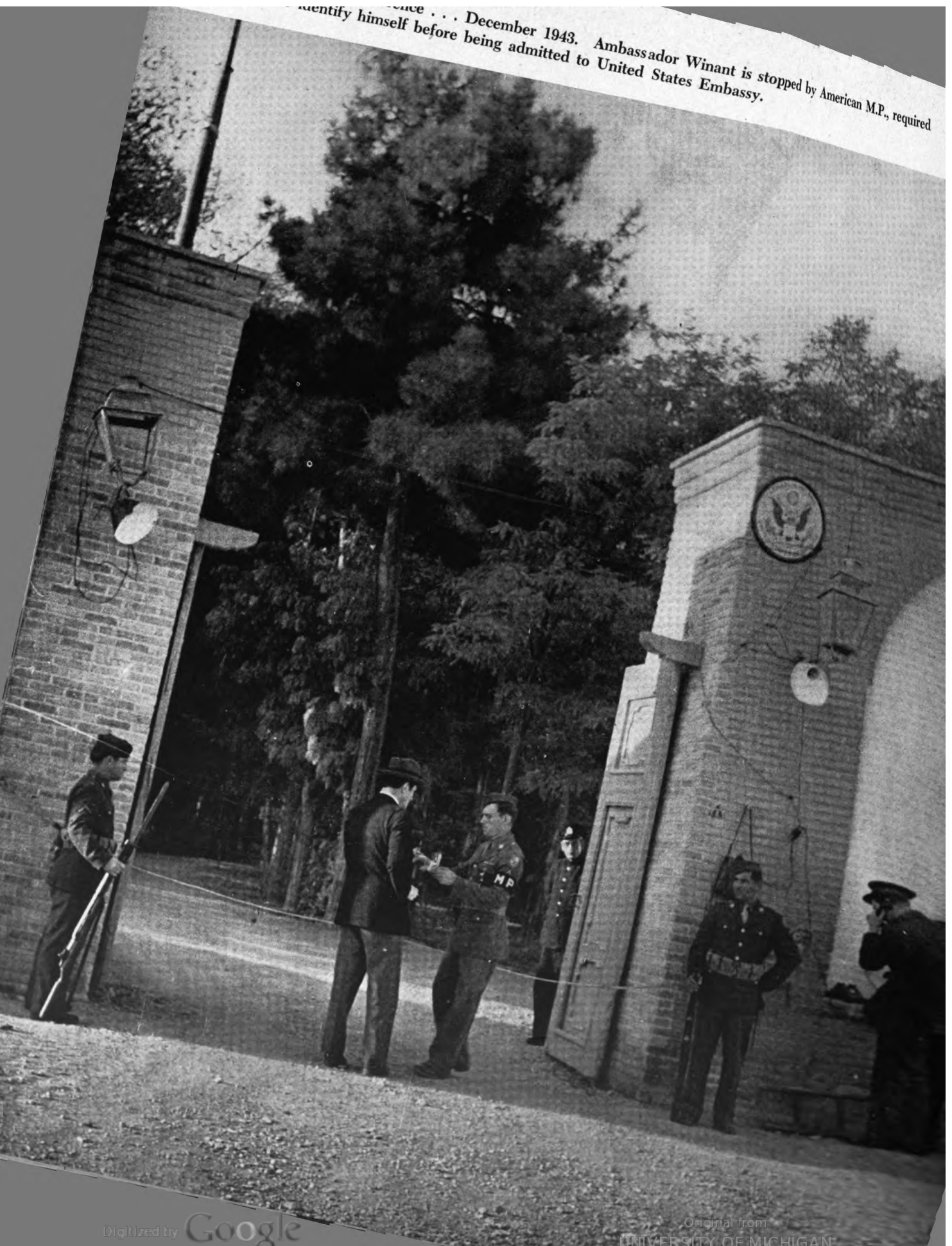




**British Representatives on Joint Chiefs of Staff (on right). Cairo Conference, December 1943. These are the top-flight Generals and Admirals of the British. (Again, "The Shadow.")**



... December 1943. Ambassador Winant is stopped by American M.P., required to identify himself before being admitted to United States Embassy.



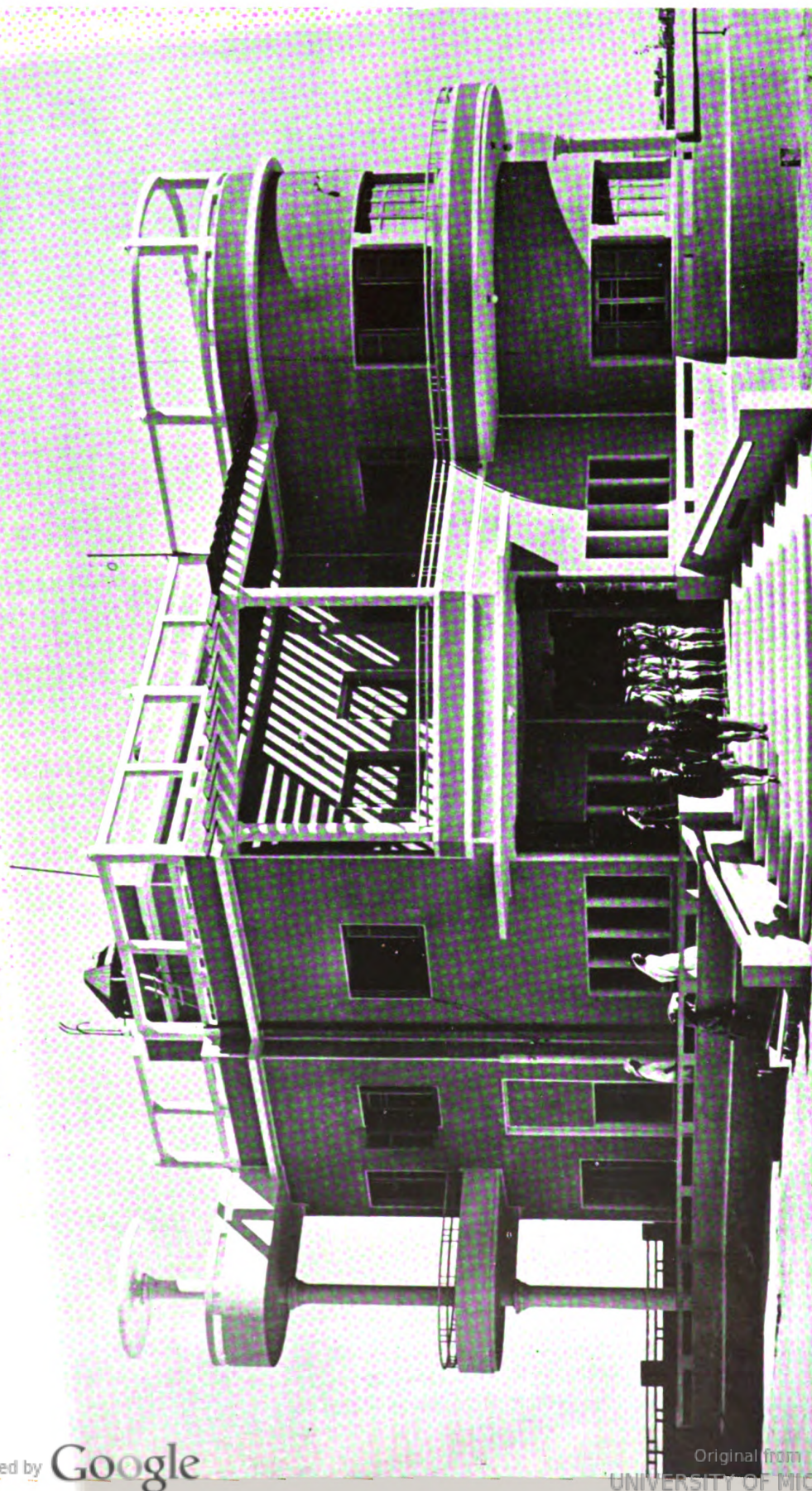


His Majesty King Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud, of Saudi Arabia. His Majesty's autograph is to be seen, in Arabic, at upper right-hand corner. This photo was taken by our official Army photographer, at the King's request. Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. December 1943.



"The King put a villa at our disposal . . . on the shore of the Red Sea not far from Jeddah. It was modern . . . we had excellent bathrooms . . . the water was hauled in daily by donkey cart, those little animals pulling prodigiously to bring in the big water barrels." (See page 95.)

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35] "As you approach His Majesty's audience chamber you pass between 50 to 60 personal bodyguards . . . in full Arabian regalia, stern of face, impassive, with daggers at belts and curved swords at their sides." Here are a few of the bodyguards at rest outside the audience chamber door. Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. December 1943. (See page 97.)

"My dinner partner at the banquet was Gamil Daoud El-Mussallamy, Charge d'Affaires of the Foreign Office. He is a charming person . . . speaks English fluently . . . is a graduate of the American University, Cairo. We became good friends." Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. December 1943. (See page 86.)

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Shaikh Yussuf Youssein, Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs, and General Royce at the Royal Banquet. The General finds his food absorbing. Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. December 1943.



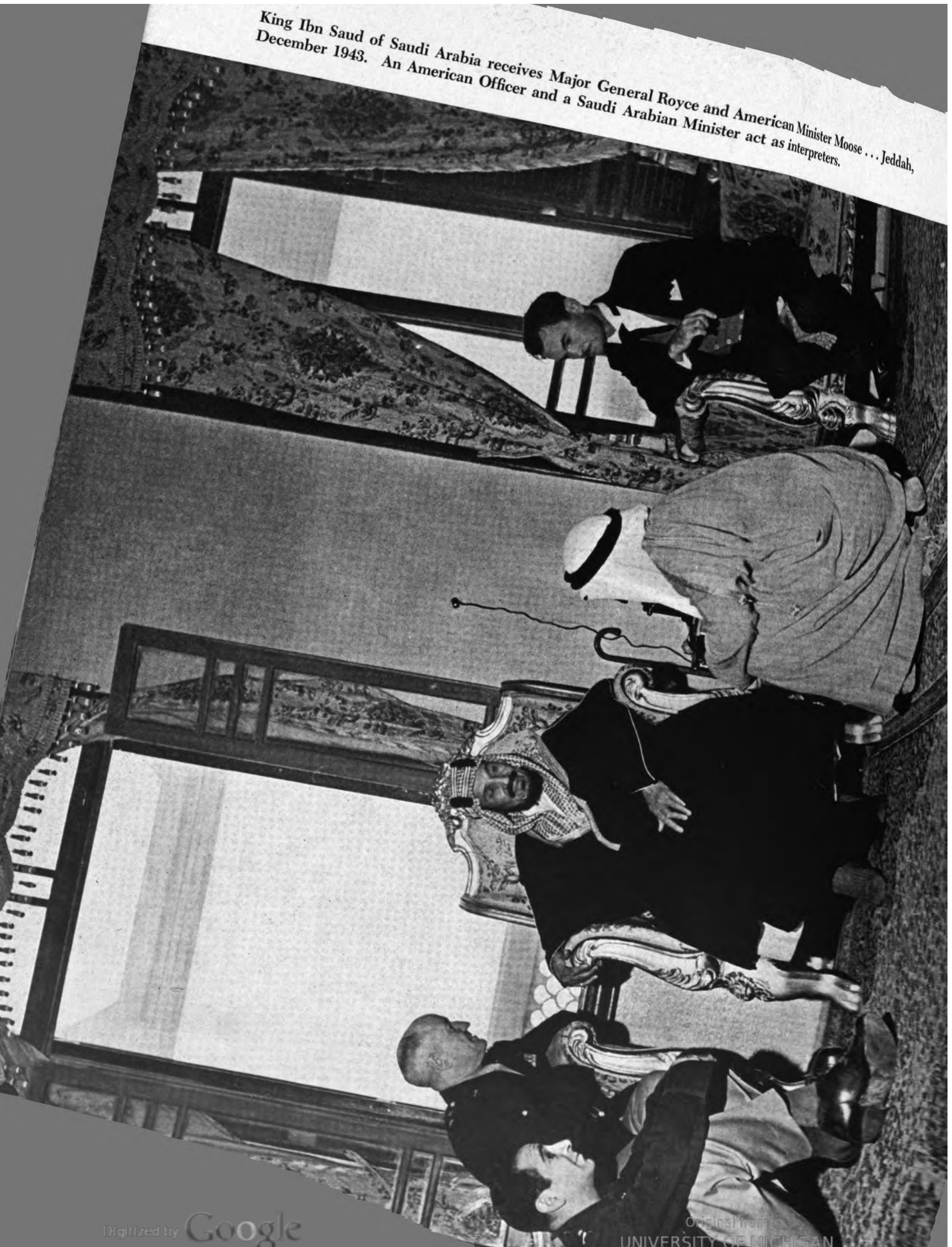
Jeddah, December 1943. American Minister Moose and British Ambassador  
left, remnants of a roasted whole sheep. Ministers, bodyguards, and personal servants attend the King.





29] "Twenty feet in front of the King stood his two special bodyguards, one a nice looking young fellow in bright red robe, with finely chiseled features and a fanatical look in his eye, always with his eyes intently upon the King, never a flicker of an eyelash or a movement of a muscle." Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, December, 1943. (See page 85.)

King Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia receives Major General Royce and American Minister Moose . . . Jeddah, December 1943. An American Officer and a Saudi Arabian Minister act as interpreters.







"We were as much objects of curiosity to the natives as they were to us." In the "Mousky" or native bazaar section of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The General carries a newly acquired Arabian fan.



A Yogi? Colonel Putman sits on a rope bed on porch of villa at Jeddah, Saudi Arabia . . . on shore of Red Sea. December 1943.

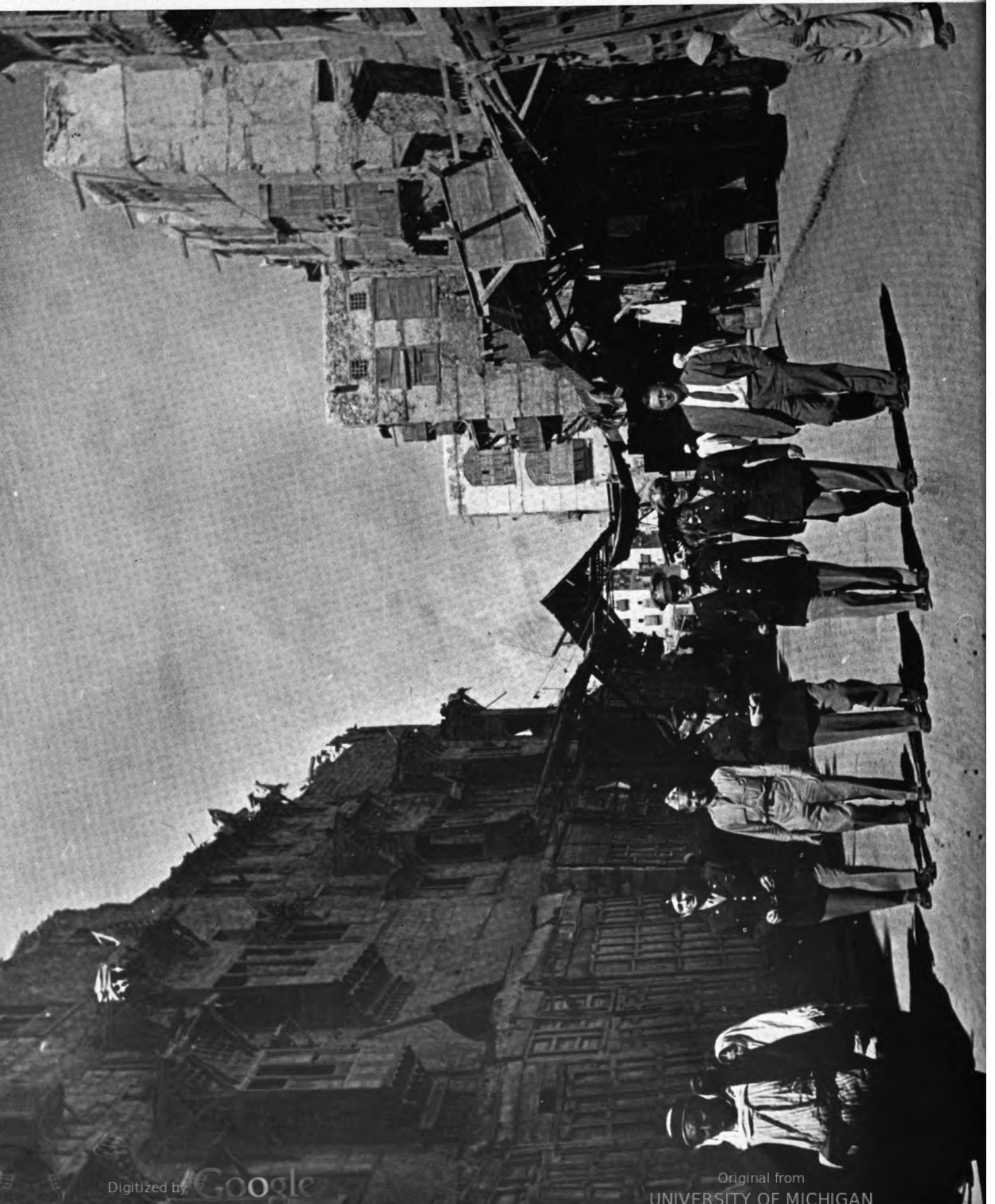




Some of our party on the steps of Jeddah's leading hotel . . . Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

Street Scene in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Our party is returning from a visit to the native "Mousky" or bazaar. The houses are typical of Jeddah's buildings.

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"We inspect some oriental rugs offered by street merchants." General Royce and Colonel Putman.

Original from

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

At His Majesty's Palace, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The King's Ministers with Minister Moose, General Royce, Colonel Dregge, and Colonel Putman.

[ 8 ]





Jeddah, Saudi Arabia . . . December 1943. At left, Najib Bey Salha, Director of Bureau of Mines and Public Works; Shaikh Abdullah Suleiman, Minister of Finance, and Gamil Daoud El-Mussallamy, Charge d'Affaires of the Foreign Office. At right, Colonel Putman.



"... at the Church of the Nativity we put on two broadcasts." Bethlehem, Christmas Day, 1943. Standing immediately in front of the spot where Christ was born, Major Hittenmark introduces Cpl. Malone and Red Cross Worker Henrietta Mitchell to a round-the-world radio audience. (See page 88.)

[ 38







"We took our specially trained Soldiers' Choir from Egypt to Bethlehem for the round-the-world broadcast . . . Christmas Day, 1943." Here they are pictured before the altar of The Church of the Nativity.



General Royce and Staff at Headquarters of Allied Expeditionary Air Forces, England. August 1944.





Visiting with Officers of one of our groups. Colonel Skrivanic, Aide to King Peter (second from left); King Peter; General Weyland; Colonel Putman; General Royce.



"We took King Peter, of Yugoslavia, along on an inspection trip." We listened in on a briefing of pilots preparing to take off on a mission. (l. to r.) Colonel Skrivanic, King Peter, General Royce, General Weyland, Colonel Putman. (See page 139.)



French pay tribute to U. S. troops that fell liberating their town. The French Mayor and his wife join with American soldiers in ceremony where our boys are buried . . . World War II's first American cemetery on France's soil.

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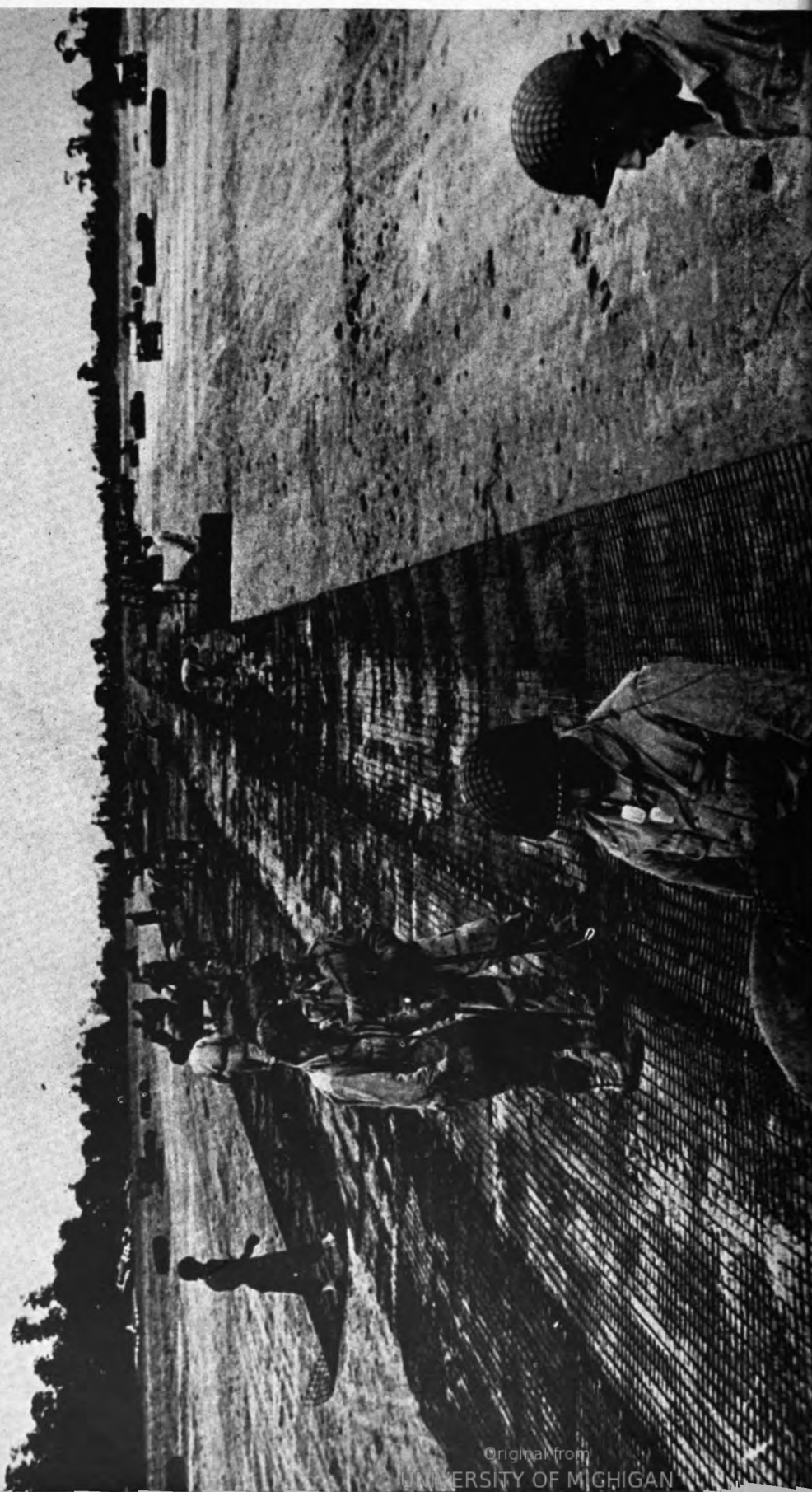


The gliders bring troops to Normandy on D-Day. Airborne infantry lands in gliders towed to France by planes of the Ninth Air Force Troop Carrier Command. Overhead the tow planes wing back toward England to pick up more loads.



Fast work in building a new landing strip in France. Engineers of the U. S. Air Forces roll wire mats over newly leveled ground to make runway for fighter and medium bomber planes. (See page 158.)

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45 ] Drama on Normandy Beachhead. Wounded German soldiers raise their hands in surrender as American troops enter a Normandy barn where the Nazis had been lying for three days without food or water. German snipers in nearby buildings attempted to prevent their comrades' capture. Original from

How weary can a Nazi get? Here, on the outskirts of Ste. Mere Eglise, Normandy, nineteen-year-old Ludwig Drescher, left, thinks it over. He and his collapsed companion were taken prisoners during the bitter fighting for this town.

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"Shaikh Ralph Bey Royce Pasha" (Major General Ralph Royce) in Arabian Costume given him by King Ibn Saud.



King Peter enjoys flying . . . is a pilot himself. Here the King stands on a C-78 . . . General Royce at left.



We model Arabian desert robes of heavy camel's hair. They are unbelievably warm for cold desert nights . . . approximately one-half inch thick. Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.



Churchill's astrakhan hat . . . a birthday present from War Correspondents at Teheran. December 1943. Modeled by John Phillips, Life photographer.

Original from

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Paris . . . and our "town house" overlooking the Seine. Eiffel Tower at left . . . the Trocadero left center. Our house may be identified by the formal garden just above the wall . . . slightly to left of bridge on right . . . second row of houses above the Seine River.

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1

EGYPT

15 October 1943

Dear Folks:

The days have been all too short since we left the States, and so much has happened that I find it impossible to write all of you as I wish I could. So I hope you'll forgive me if my letters have been stingy, inadequate scribblings. And I hope you'll forgive me, too, if I substitute this "community letter" for the individual letters I'd like to write but which just don't get written. If you will, I'll try to tell you about some of the things which have been happening these last few months.

In the middle of August, General Royce received instructions that he would be sent soon to the Middle East to command all U. S. Army Forces in that theater. He offered me the chance to go along, and of course I jumped at it.



So on September 2nd we left Mitchel Field, Long Island . . . Headquarters of the First Air Force . . . and flew to Miami.

There a trans-Atlantic plane was set up, and before dawn of the second morning (September 4) we were off. This was a four-engined transport . . . a C-54 . . . a cargo ship. And at the General's specific request it had no chairs of any kind, only rough benches along the sides . . . the so-called "bucket seats." In the center of the cabin was a huge box of parts for tanks. We threw mats on the floor, wrapped ourselves in blankets, and for the remaining hours of darkness we slept.

Waking, we saw nothing but ocean. Then about midmorning we caught sight of land . . . soon we were over the island country of the Dominican Republic, rough and mountainous. Hours later, Trinidad came into view . . . then the mainland of South America and at midafternoon we sat down on one of our air transport bases.

A late lunch here . . . the ship refueled . . . and we were off again. Soon we looked down on the tangled, seemingly endless jungles of the Amazon. They remind one of the Okefenokee Swamp country, only worse and more of it. It would certainly be impossible country for a ship in trouble.

Night closed in and with it came nasty weather . . . black clouds and rain. Hour after hour we flew on through the night . . . not a sign of a light or any other evidence of human habitations. To a greenhorn at such flying, it was a fantastic situation. How could we keep accurate track of where we were? How could we be sure to find the next air base on our route?

From time to time we slept . . . on our mats on the floor. Then about two o'clock our ears registered a change in altitude . . . we were coming down . . . but our eyes, glued to the little windows, could see nothing but the rain on the glass and the black night outside.

Finally below us we saw a light . . . then many lights . . . the first signs of civilization since night had closed in. It was our airport . . . Natal, Brazil. In a few minutes we were on the ground . . . breakfast waited for us in the mess hall nearby.

I was tremendously impressed. This was my first real experience with the long distance, transoceanic flying of our Air Transport Command. It seemed miraculous that, after eight to ten hours in the air . . . with no beacons or landmarks along the way . . . we could with such precision come down through the heavy clouds and find ourselves exactly over our airport. I've done a lot of such flying since that first experience, but I'm still marveling at the amazing achievements of these past few years.

Breakfast over and we were ready to be off again. This was IT . . . we were going to fly the Atlantic. I was genuinely thrilled with the idea . . . I wondered whether I would be scared, whether I would be affected by long hours at high altitudes.

We took off and climbed up through the overcast . . . to an altitude that varied between 10,000 and 12,000 feet. An hour or so later the clouds broke so we could see the ocean below.

Hour after hour we continued our uneventful way . . . we slept, played gin rummy, read, or ate from our hamper of food which had been sent along. It was all most commonplace. Soon it seemed perfectly natural . . . as though we belonged there.

As we flew East, the time changed, pushing our watches ahead five hours. Late in the afternoon we saw shoreline ahead . . . Africa. Fifteen to twenty minutes later we landed at Dakar. This was Sunday afternoon. Friday morning . . . some thirty-two hours before . . . we had left Miami.

We drove in to Dakar and spent the night there at the quarters of our officers. In the morning we had our first real look at Africa . . . or rather, at what an African town like Dakar is like . . . for we drove around the city.

Blacks, blacks, blacks everywhere . . . in all sorts and colors of costumes . . . all varieties from colorful flowing robes to scanty G-strings, or actually nothing. Most of the town is made up of huts . . . the comfortable homes of the well-to-do (Europeans I assume) are few and far between . . . squalor is the rule rather than the exception.

In the morning sun, blacks lie asleep . . . on the sidewalks or along the road . . . wherever they happen to be when they feel like lying down to rest, with flowing garments pulled over their heads to keep light and flies from disturbing them. As we observed later, they do the same thing morning, night, and noon.

At noon we drove back to the airport and had lunch . . . then prepared to take off. It was hot . . . almost stifling in the plane before we got going . . . and to add to our discomfort they sprayed the plane's insides with insecticide before we could take off. Insects must not be carried from one part of Africa to another . . . too many tropical diseases can be spread. But soon after takeoff we climbed to a good altitude . . . the air was cool and we were comfortable.

We headed down the coast toward Liberia . . . past Bathurst, Freetown, Monrovia . . . to land at one of our ATC bases . . . a modern airport literally hewn out of the jungle. A swollen jungle river runs past the modern buildings which house the headquarters and officers quarters and mess. Huge cottonwood trees tower above. In the evening, black natives in dugout canoes paddle heavily up the river against the swift current . . . singing a pleasing melody in rhythm with their paddle strokes. It is weird. The river, they tell us, is infested with carnivorous fish . . . so swimming is impossible.

Before dinner . . . which, incidentally, was excellent . . . we had a drink and much conversation with the officers who had been in Liberia for many months.

I was especially interested in some of the things they told us about their work with the Liberian Army . . . about Liberian politics.

One of the officers was leaving the next day to go to Monrovia to head up an Officers Training School for the Liberian Army . . . under agreement between our U. S. Government and that of Liberia. He told of arguments they had had with President Bradley (President of Liberia) and his staff over the curriculum for this O. T. S. President Bradley and his staff apparently insisted that their officers had to be taught the full curriculum given to U. S. officers . . . including, for example, anti-tank gun. This, in spite of the fact that there was no reasonable possibility of anyone ever using tanks against them in the



Liberian jungles . . . no near neighbors had any tanks, nor did the Liberians.

Liberia is a strange country . . . a black republic founded under the benign influence of our own United States as a refuge for slaves freed after our War between the States, and others who might wish to enjoy the American type of freedom on African soil. Stories of their politics interested me. Here is one of them:

Liberia, with several million people, is ruled by a "class" or group of descendants of American slaves plus some blacks from Jamaica. This "ruling class" numbers only a few thousand relatively . . . variously estimated from 10,000 to 100,000.

There are two political parties . . . the True-Whigs and the Democrats. The ruling party is that of the True-Whigs. They passed a law some years ago restricting the right to vote to *citizens of the black race who own property in fee simple* . . . thus holding the vote in relatively few hands, of their own group for the most part. Never, in years, has the "True-Whig" party lost an election. They say the "results" are invariably something like 16,000 votes to 1.

They told us that these people sold many of their own natives into slavery . . . to the Arabs, the Portuguese in North Africa, etc. . . . as late as 1932! In that year the slave traffic was finally stopped.

It made me do a lot of thinking . . . what will happen when other downtrodden people are given an opportunity at our type of freedom?

The next morning we took a motor launch and explored the river. The dense jungle undergrowth and tall trees came close to the water's edge. Here and there were small partial clearings in which stood the huts of the natives . . . crude shelters . . . some on high pilings . . . just enough protection to keep out the worst of the weather, and a place to call home. Blacks of all sizes, sexes, and ages . . . in various stages of dress and undress . . . watched us curiously as we passed. Apparently they were fairly well accustomed to the white foreigners by this time.

Returning, we drove to a nearby rubber plantation . . . one of Firestone's. And this is a tremendous operation. Of course it is

headed by a limited number of whites . . . technical men and administrative men who handle the 20,000 native workers. They told us these black workers receive an average wage of eighteen cents per day. However the corporation must furnish the workers with rice . . . the natives won't work unless they get it . . . and they sell the rice to the workers at two cents to four cents per pound. So apparently the company takes a pretty heavy loss on rice . . . which, in part at least, helps to raise the actual pay of the natives.

Rubber trees of all sizes stood in neat groves . . . young trees, middle size, and full grown ones. The white milky rubber sap was flowing from the big trees (18 inches in diameter) and from the medium sized ones (8 to 10 inches in diameter).

They told us that Firestone has 1,000,000 acres under contract here in this area . . . 100,000 acres are now planted in rubber trees.

We went through the plant where the sap is converted into a crude slab form so it can be shipped to the States for refining. It was a modern plant with much modern equipment . . . dryers, curing ovens, material handling trucks, and so on. And the whites have a little village of most attractive homes . . . these red brick houses stand out in sharp contrast to the lush green of the heavy vegetation all about.

Again the natives fascinated me. They seemed to be milling up and down the roads in rather aimless fashion . . . dressed in strange get-ups of vivid colors. But the real pay-off was to see those blacks who had umbrellas. An umbrella is a mark of distinction in this society . . . and those fortunate enough to own such a luxury strutted their stuff with all the self-conscious pride of an elegantly dressed Harlemit on Easter morning.

But we had to get going. So back to the field we went, and soon were off . . . to fly on down the Gold Coast to Accra. The next morning . . . off again . . . still over the deep jungle country . . . until we approached Kano, Nigeria, where the land opened up into cultivated fields here and there. Here we landed.

It was late afternoon as we drove into the ancient walled city of Kano . . . where camels and airplanes meet . . . where caravans

cross paths with four-engined transports, bombers, and fighters. For here is a town that is still almost as it was in Biblical times more than 2,000 years ago. Outside the walled city are some modern homes of Syrians, English . . . and the Palace of the Emir with his four or five wives and 269 concubines (the figures are not mine by count . . . but that's what our local officers told us).

Inside the walls everything was as I imagine it was at the time of Christ . . . blacks in flowing robes filled the streets, goats, kids (human variety), houses of dried mud and straw in the style of ancient Palestine, strongly reminiscent of the Spanish-Indian pueblo houses of Arizona-New Mexico.

It was almost dusk as we drove through the streets . . . our car a strange incongruity in this land of centuries ago. These blacks are Mohammedans . . . and, as it was the start of one of their fast seasons, they were preparing their first meal of the day over open fires in their doorways . . . during such fast seasons no food or water may be swallowed until after sunset.

We drove through the market . . . it was crowded . . . and here alone one modern note jarred with the whole setting . . . for here were a few bicycles.

As we retraced our route, through the doorways of the unlighted houses we saw white-robed figures squatting in the deepening shadows . . . at rest at the end of the day, probably swapping the day's juiciest gossip. A young boy squats beside the road, washes himself in the Mohammedan manner, and begins his evening prayers. We were forced to drive slowly to avoid hitting goats, blind old men, careless youngsters wandering about the streets. They all stop to watch us pass . . . occasionally one of them cries "Hi" or "Chief" and salutes.

As we drove out through the narrow mud-straw archway gate . . . so narrow that our driver scraped a rubber guard off the rear fender as we passed through . . . I had the feeling that this simply couldn't be happening . . . that we must be in a dream . . . reliving the history of twenty centuries ago.

Long before daylight the following morning we were in the air again . . . two hours later we sat down for breakfast at Maiduguri . . .



off for another flight over green fields and mountains, then across great desert wastes to land in late afternoon beside the Nile, near Khartoum . . . close by the spot where the Blue Nile and the White Nile join. It was hot . . . nearly 100 . . . but dry. The dry heat was welcome after the humidity, mustiness, and mildew of Nigeria, the Gold Coast, and Liberia.

Another early morning take-off and we flew north over the narrow strip of green which is the fertile Nile valley, and across the desert sands which stretch as far as eyes can see on either side. This is Egypt . . . this thin strip of rich, green country cutting through endless miles of desert waste.

Hour after hour the scene continued, varied only by glimpses of Aswan Dam, Luxor, and the ancient City of Thebes with its Valley of the Kings, where ancient Pharaohs lie. Past Memphis . . . now an excellent highway appeared along the Nile, lined with trees . . . in the distance the Pyramids, the Sphinx, and the city of Cairo . . .

It was midafternoon when we landed . . . and hot . . . September 10th. Just eight days before we had left Mitchel Field, Long Island. That's no speed record for planes, of course. But when we stopped to think of all we had seen and done it seemed that we must have left the States many, many weeks before.

Of course we were interested in finding out what sort of living quarters we would get. In this we were happily surprised to find that several apartments were reserved for the General . . . in a most modern apartment house in a delightful section of town. Not that he occupies several himself, but with members of his immediate staff and the ever-present visitors who come through such a place as Cairo, these quarters are always in use. I was fortunate in being able to live here also. The Nile is just below us on one side, and on the other the green fields of a Country-Club-in-town golf course. Our apartment is on the sixth floor, so we get every breeze that comes along.

We inherited several excellent servants from the General who had been in command previously . . . he had occupied these same quarters. The most important member of our house staff is Mahmoud (pronounce it Macmoud, with heavy guttural emphasis on the

"ach," heavier than German). He's the cook or chef. And can he cook? He has the greatest genius at taking seemingly unimportant ingredients and coming up with something that is super in tickling the palate. I've never gone much for crepe suzette. But Mahmoud makes something he calls simply "pancakes" that beats any crepe suzette I ever touched tongue to.

Then there's Hassan . . . he's No. 1 Boy or general operator of the house outside of Mahmoud's domain. Hassan is a husky Sudanese . . . black as the proverbial ace of spades . . . as of course is Mahmoud, for he too is Sudanese. These boys are considered the finest servants over here . . . much better than the regular Arabs . . . and are said to be scrupulously honest. That's something one can't bank on with the average Arab.

Abdul was Hassan's first assistant . . . or No. 2 Boy. I say "was," for Abdul got a bit out of hand and we had to fire him. Now we have Fadl as No. 2 Boy . . . and he's another Sudanese and a good guy seemingly, even though he doesn't understand much American. Neither does Mahmoud for that matter. Hassan understands most, but even with him it is difficult to get much farther than simple instructions.

Hassan is an amusing chap by spells . . . then dour and almost surly. But we got a great kick out of him recently. Two or three times we had seen a large mouse (so the General said . . . I said it was a small rat) run across the floor of the apartment. So we made attempts to get some traps. That had to be taken up with some bureau or other of the Egyptian Government, and of course that took some days. Finally we brought the traps home . . . handed them to Hassan. He understood what they were for alright. But he shook his head and muttered "No . . . No . . . mafish" . . . which meant, "It is all finished." We prodded him for an explanation and he almost exploded with, "No . . . mafish . . . me stab him." That still didn't make sense to us. But with gestures Hassan eventually made us understand that he had taken a kitchen knife and had thrown it at the mouse (or rat) and impaled the varmint on the blade.

Believe it or not, that's apparently what had happened. We saw nothing more of the mouse (or rat).

Hassan really isn't as vicious as that sounds, even though he must have some dexterity with the knife. You should see him when he steps out for his afternoon stroll. He gets all dolled up in a great blue robe that appears to be of excellent quality silk, very full so that it flows like a bridal gown . . . a large white silk scarf about his neck and a bright red fez or tarboosh on his head. In his hand he carries a silver-banded walking stick. His coal black face fairly shines as he struts his stuff . . . and believe me he really is handsome.

These boys get what is considered pretty good pay for this part of the World. Mahmoud gets a top salary of seven to eight pounds. or approximately \$30.00, per month. Hassan gets about \$25.00 . . . Fadl has to be content with \$20.00. Of course they get their food . . . but they go home nights, though they will work until almost all hours when we have company. *And they don't gripe about having dinner as late as 9:00 or even 10:00 p. m.* Of course late dinners are the rule in Cairo anyhow. The British work from 8:00 a. m. until 1:00 p. m. . . . then take the afternoon off . . . return to work at 5:00, and quit at 8:00 or 8:30. Dinners start after that.

Speaking of servants' pay . . . they also seem to have a system of "totin" much like the colored servants do in the States. We ignore that.

A few days after we landed here we took a trip over Bengazi . . . out over the territory where the British 8th Army battled Rommel. Here and there over the desert we could see remains of wrecked planes, trucks, tanks. Again there would be pock-like marks . . . apparently bombs had fallen in great numbers. We flew over El Alemain, Tobruk . . . many ships sunk in the harbor here. The Mediterranean . . . as blue as ever it could be.

Across the desert sands ran hundreds of crisscrossing tracks of all sorts of vehicles . . . apparently the battle flowed back and forth over this area. Approaching Bengazi we saw great junk piles of planes. of all types and nationalities . . . Italian, German, British, American. In the harbor were many wrecks of ships . . . the bombing must have

been heavy, for there was little left but twisted masses of steel. One ship was cut entirely in half.

Leaving our plane and driving, we passed acre after acre of ammunition . . . left by the retreating Germans and Italians . . . shells and bombs of all kinds and sizes. But it is useless to us . . . for the most part . . . our guns are of different caliber.

Another time we flew across the same route, but continued on to Tripoli, Tunis, and Algiers. One night we stopped at Tunis and stayed at a beautiful country mansion . . . now used by some of our Generals as quarters . . . right on the edge of the Mediterranean, high up on a rocky cliff. It was a most attractive spot. Close by were the ruins of ancient Carthage . . . we visited them next morning . . . the old Roman amphitheater, marble columns, and other remnants of that other civilization.

Spending the night at this beautiful villa I could not help noticing some differences between the European-African idea of splendor and ours. There were no screens on the windows . . . apparently never had been . . . and mosquitos almost devoured you unless you pulled your bed out into a spot where a steady breeze discouraged the hungry insects. The electric lights were wholly inadequate and dismal. No use trying to read in bed. Heating facilities were practically nonexistent. When chilly days came, you were expected to accept them.

At home in the States we may not have so many folks who live so elegantly, but practically any American knows more genuine comfort than do these so-called "hoity-toity folks" over here.

Returning home, we flew across a bay of the Mediterranean, and I was interested in seeing the Islands of Lampedusa, Linosa, and Pantelleria . . . the last was especially of interest, for it was here that aerial bombardment alone forced surrender of the enemy garrison . . . and surrender was made to an Air Force General without aid from any ground or sea forces.

But I'm almost forgetting to tell you of all the important folks we've been meeting here. For, of course, Cairo is now on the fringe of the War and much of the activity is of a social or diplomatic nature.



General Royce paid his respects to King Farouk of Egypt soon after we arrived. A week or so later we took His Majesty flying in a big C-54 . . . also his Chief of Staff of the Egyptian Army, Major General Attallah Pasha, his Naval Aide, Lieut. Commander Atif, and others of his staff. We flew down to Alexandria and back. At General Royce's invitation the King took one of the pilot's seats, and part of the time he flew the huge ship . . . he is a pilot himself . . . and you could see that he was getting a tremendous kick out of it.

Also we have met King George of Greece and young King Peter of Yugoslavia. King Peter and his staff have recently arrived to set up headquarters in a villa out near the Pyramids. Other important folks . . . VIPERS they call them here, a corruption of Very Important Persons . . . have come and gone . . . Cordell Hull and Averell Harriman en route to Russia . . . Anthony Eden, and others. This is a very active spot.

One afternoon we went out to take a close look at the Pyramids and the Sphinx. I'm not going to try to describe these to you . . . you've read about them if you haven't seen them. And any Tourist's Guide can tell you about them. The only unusual thing I noticed about them was that under the Sphinx's chin are piled scores or hundreds of sandbags. Apparently they are to protect it in case of bombing attack . . . to prevent the head from being knocked off so easily.

That brings up the why of the flattened nose on the Sphinx . . . for it is broken off, as you can see from any picture. They say this was done by Napoleon's artillery . . . they used the Sphinx as a target for firing practice.

We made an interesting flying trip to the East. Up across Palestine . . . across the rough, hilly, barren country where Jerusalem and Bethlehem lie side by side . . . The Garden of Gethsemane is easily distinguishable. Soon Jericho was below, a green spot in the valley surrounded by barren mountains . . . the Dead Sea stretches away to the south . . . to the north is the Sea of Galilee, but we couldn't see it as the air was hazy.

Several hours later we saw the Tigris and Euphrates rivers ahead . . . nearer us was the Euphrates . . . Baghdad was just beyond. This is Iraq. We landed here for gas and lunch . . . then off again. More hours of flying, over barren desert country . . . a great mountain range ahead, snow-capped peaks that rise up to 18,000 feet. The moun-



tain range forms a bowl-like area in which lies Teheran . . . the bowl is open to the desert plain to the west, from which we approached. This is Iran, or what we have always thought of as Persia.

Teheran looks like a very modern city as one flies over it . . . it is a town of approximately 750,000. But when we landed and drove through the city we saw other sides of the picture. Some of the buildings are pretty good . . . but for the most part they are shabby, dilapidated. There are no sewers . . . no water system . . . except that from the nearby mountains streams of cool, fresh water run down the gutters or ditches at the sides of the streets. The natives take their drinking water from these ditches . . . likewise they use them to wash clothes in and to dispose of their sewage. The next fellow down the line repeats the process . . . and so on ad infinitum. What

a sanitary system! No wonder our Army Docs insist that we boil all drinking water or sterilize it in lister bags.

In Teheran we met Major General Connolly, who heads up the Persian Gulf Command . . . the command that handles everything from the Persian Gulf to Russia . . . assembling airplanes, trucks, etc., that are sent from the States and delivering them to the Russians . . . also operating the railroads, repairing rolling stock in shops, and so on. We visited the shops in and near Teheran.

I drove about the city with several of General Connolly's Staff Officers, who showed me the sights and told me of some of their experiences. Here's one you may enjoy:

They said that shortly after General Connolly had set up his headquarters here in Teheran and got things more or less organized with the Persian (now called Iranian) Government and the Russians, some of our O.W.I. men arrived . . . they referred to them as "pink-cheeked, bright boys from Washington." Of course they at once set to work putting out information . . . supposedly to further the war effort and our relations with the peoples of these countries.

Remember, this is the land of ancient Persia . . . where from time immemorial man has been the great Lord and Master . . . woman has been his slave and mistress, with no claim to any similar rights or privileges. Even today these social customs go unquestioned.

Among the earliest efforts of the O.W.I. boys was a poster campaign in Teheran and vicinity, advocating coeducation for Iranian women.

My friends from General Connolly's staff couldn't even tell the story without getting "hopping mad," as they remembered all the trouble this had caused them, trying to explain it away to the Iranian Government officials.

Next day we flew down across the mountains to Ahwaz and Abadan . . . to bases where Lend-Lease equipment and materials are received and assembled for passing on to the Russians. This is an amazingly interesting operation . . . and the number of planes and trucks flowing through here to Russia is a big factor in bolstering Russia's strength.

Back a day later . . . across the spot where the Garden of Eden was . . . back via Baghdad, Palestine, and on home. My head was more or less awlirl with all we had seen. And there certainly is a lot of hot, desert country in these lands of Iran and Iraq. Down in the Persian Gulf Area date groves flourish . . . perhaps the greatest date growing area in the world.

Back in Cairo . . . and I've found a new enthusiasm. Near Cairo, at one of our bases, we have a motor repair shop . . . repairing engines from American cars and trucks for the British. These are engines from cars and trucks which the British had, which have been disabled out on the desert . . . many of them have been out there for six months or more, rusted, full of dirt, sand. They come into our repair shop and get a complete reconditioning . . . then are sent back to the British to replace engines that go bad.

It is a very interesting operation . . . and it saves a lot . . . for every bit of such work that can be done over here saves just that much shipping space which can be used to bring over ammunition and other vital supplies.

But the most interesting part of the whole thing is that *a high per cent of the mechanics are ARABS* . . . literally street Arabs . . . taken right off the streets of Cairo and nearby towns and given a brief training by our own GI mechanics.

These Arabs are unusual creatures . . . most of them have had very little or no education of any kind, as we understand formal schooling. Most of them never did any kind of mechanical work . . . if in fact they ever had any kind of a job. Moreover, you must remember that these Arab boys have no chance to learn anything about cars as our American lads do. They simply haven't any opportunity to know anything of this kind. It has always been supposed that these poor, ragged, uneducated Arabs were unintelligent vagabonds and good for very little that required any skill or headwork.

But the amazing fact is being demonstrated in our shops that, with a few days' training, they become quite adept at simple mechanical operations . . . soon, with more training and practice, they are doing fairly complicated jobs.



So, in our shops, where Arabs outnumber our own GI's, we have stepped up production tremendously . . . the shops have turned out as many as 100 reconditioned engines in one day. That's a real boon to our war effort here.

Moreover, the Arab boys get a big kick out of learning . . . and they take a pride in accomplishment that is akin to that of any American. Sure, they have much to learn. But they have proved that, given an opportunity, they can learn . . . they want to learn. With a bit of help they could go a long way.

As I said, I am genuinely enthusiastic over this experiment . . . and its success. It seems to me that here may be one of the best possible ways to help the so-called downtrodden peoples of the world . . . by giving them a chance to do for themselves. If we could do that, perhaps we'd be a long way on the road to solving some of the world's war problems.

I've already written much more than I intended . . . but, as you can see, I am "having fun" over here.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Put".

P. S.—Two weeks ago I was made Public Relations Officer for this Middle East Theater . . . and my Captain's bars were exchanged for the gold leaf of a Major. Naturally the latter pleases me. And the P.R.O. work promises to be extremely interesting.



2

EGYPT

15 December 1943

Dear Folks:

Here it is . . . the middle of December and "winter." So far it has been a most benign "winter" with us. The days have been bright and warm but not hot . . . nights cool off so we sleep under a blanket or two. It almost never rains . . . even clouds are a rarity.

Early October was something else again . . . a real hot spell hit us the last days of September and carried over well into October. We had what they call a "kamseen wind" . . . it really is a high wind and it brings high temperatures and considerable humidity night and day. ("Kamseen," they tell me, means fifty . . . hence it is supposed to be a 50-day wind. But it didn't last that long with us . . . only about two weeks, like some of the hot spells we usually get at home in September.)

Along with our hot spell we had "Bairam." What's "Bairam"? Well, it's the start of four days of feasting which marks the end of "Ramadan" . . . and "Ramadan" is a month of fasting for Moham-medans during September.

During "Ramadan" the true follower of Mohammed won't eat or drink anything until after the sun sets. Then comes "Bairam," and that's the "blow-off" period.

During Bairam the natives crowd the streets, all dressed up . . . i.e., dressed up as much as they can with their tawdry clothes . . . on foot, riding donkeys, in carts. Arab taxi drivers told me this was their Christmas, apparently hoping I'd give them a present. Everywhere you went you saw "Wogs," as they are called, milling about . . . many dirty beggars in utter rags crying, "Bakshish" (meaning "Give me money") . . . how those rags hang on their thin bodies is a mystery. Camels trudge by . . . occasionally three or four black-draped females ride in the baskets on either side of a camel . . . donkey carts pass with scads of women and kids packed together or on the cart's small platform, while a man walks at the donkey's side.

Hot . . . and sticky. (One day they said it was 107 on Shepherds Hotel porch.) Dirt and filth on the streets and on the people. A dirty sidewalk barber cuts a dark boy's hair and gives him a shave (you wonder how many diseases he may pass along with the shave). Many of the "Wogs" are blind of an eye or squint, indicating eye trouble. Apparently a high per cent of them have serious eye afflictions. You remember the small children you've seen . . . in mother's arms or dragging along on her hand . . . with six or eight flies digging away in the corner of the baby's already festering eye . . . Mother doesn't even attempt to shoo the flies away.

There is much that is not pleasant in Cairo. Yet a few blocks away you see the modern, comfortable or lavish homes of the well-to-do. There is much that is fascinating, exotic, enjoyable. And during the mild, sunny days of winter, Cairo can be superb. Seven miles to the west, stand the Pyramids and the Sphinx . . . looking down on this little-changing scene as they have for thousands of years . . . symbolic, perhaps, of Cairo's hesitancy to accept modern ways.

We don't completely escape the hazards of Egypt's lack of modern sanitation. Sooner or later something we eat or drink gives us an unhappy time for a few days. Your stomach is upset, your head aches, you feel miserable all over . . . a sort of combination of baby's colic

and the result of a small boy's eating too many green apples, plus a few extra touches of misery for good measure. They call it "Gyppy Tummy." We've all had it. Probably we'll have it again. It is common all over the Middle East . . . but they call it different names in different places. In Delhi, India, they call it "Delly Belly."

Of course we've had quite a few VIPERS in Cairo these past few months . . . that seems to be the usual. Frederic March has been here, doing some U.S.O. shows. Donald Nelson came through. James Landis arrived to handle Lend-Lease matters. Secretary Hull and Averell Harriman . . . Secretary Morgenthau and General Somervell . . . all stopped for a few days or more. Many of them we met at the airport . . . some of them we escorted about to see some of our military installations. That sort of thing is just part of the job here.

October 27th . . . "For breakfast we had Generals" . . . that's a notation I find in my log. Lieutenant General Somervell, Major General Echols, Major General Gross, Major General Royce, and Brigadier General Hurley. We lowly Majors hardly rated above Fadl, our No. 2 boy.

One Sunday in late October we had an invitation from King Farouk to visit his model farm . . . just a nice drive to the east of Cairo. He invited quite a party . . . approximately 75 American officers from our headquarters, Red Cross girls, a few WAC's, and some civilians connected with our operations here.

Right out on what was formerly just straight desert they have done a marvelous job of demonstrating what can be done when water is brought to this parched land. Five thousand acres are under cultivation . . . raising all sorts of vegetables, fruits, and animals. They even have young forests growing . . . apparently this enterprise was started years ago . . . doubtless by Farouk's father or grandfather.

They have done a lot to develop oranges . . . that's one of Farouk's pet projects. Palestine has always raised better citrus fruits than Egypt, and Farouk wants to put Egypt on a self-sufficient basis so far as oranges are concerned.

He has a fine stable of perfectly gorgeous Arabian horses . . . hundreds of gazelles . . . fine camels. Many of our party took rides



on camels, and that is an experience. Their motion is unusual, to say the least. Especially when they get up from their lying down position where one mounts . . . or when they lie down again . . . it gets to be a rough sea, difficult to retain one's seat and dignity.

Then His Majesty threw a luncheon on the lawn of his "castle" . . . this is just one of a half dozen or more such "country palaces" he has at various spots. It was an elegant affair . . . liveried servants swarmed all over the place . . . the finest of liquors (e.g., Johnny Walker Black Label Scotch), fine Havana cigars, rare cordials. And the lunch itself was a seven- or eight-course dinner of all the delicacies of the Middle East.

General Hurley had arrived in "our fair city" about the middle of October, just after I last wrote you, as personal representative of President Roosevelt. He was on a tour of inspection, reporting directly to the President. General Royce invited him to stay at our "flat" (apartment to you benighted Colonials), for they were old friends from Australia over a year ago and from earlier associations.

So Hurley stayed with us. Thus we got pretty well acquainted, and I was able to be of some service to him during his stay here. He was making plans to continue his trip on to India and China, and he invited me to go along . . . by "hook and crook" I managed to get General Royce's approval.

We spent some busy days arranging for extra food, blankets, ammunition, and so on, with which to stock the plane for the trip . . . and making last-minute arrangements so things would be handled okeh during our absence. For this was to be quite a jaunt . . . not only to India and China, but we were to make a side trip into Afghanistan on our way back. Much of the country to be covered is wild and rough. So we had to prepare for almost any eventuality. We expected to be gone approximately six weeks.

We left here the last day of October . . . across Palestine, a stop at Baghdad, another at Abadan on the Persian Gulf . . . at Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, we paused for a few hours to see Ministers of King Ibn Saud and our American people who head up the Arabian American Oil Company there. Then on across the Arabian Sea to Karachi,

India, for overnight; and into New Delhi the next morning, across hundreds of miles of the "Thar" or Indian Desert.

As we flew in low near New Delhi the city was beautiful . . . and the surrounding country appeared to be very fertile. On every hill, so it seemed, stood an old-time fort or castle . . . now falling in ruins, for the most part, though some were still in fairly good condition. For miles around Delhi these old ruins are to be found. We inquired . . . were told these were the remains of ancient Delhis which had been abandoned . . . apparently the town has been built five or six times over the many centuries of its existence . . . when an old city becomes obsolete they simply move away and build another nearby.

This is apparently what is happening now . . . for we were driven into New Delhi, which is a beautiful new city . . . Old Delhi is five miles away and almost a ruin.

Here General Hurley was met by Major General George Stratemeyer. We put up at a modern hotel.

For almost a week Hurley was busy with conferences . . . he saw all of the "big wigs" . . . Lord Mountbatten, Viceroy Wavell, General Auchinleck of the British, and of course our own American Generals.

Meanwhile we managed to keep busy at various tasks . . . and looking over New Delhi. For this really is an impressive town. The British have built fine government buildings . . . the streets are broad . . . parks are well kept. Old Delhi is just the opposite . . . streets are narrow, filthy . . . beggars in unbelievable states of emaciation and filthiness seem to be everywhere . . . many of them are the so-called "Holy Men" . . . Sacred Cows roam the streets at will. In short, it is a "mess" that beggars description.

Our first evening we went out for dinner with an American officer we knew who was stationed in New Delhi. We went to a place called "Davico's" . . . had a delightful meal of steak, potatoes, peas, tomatoes, bread and butter, and a long "John Collins." I was amazed that food was so plentiful and so excellent. I was even more surprised with the price . . . 5 rupees, or approximately \$1.50. I had thought that India was in a bad way and needed much of our help.

At the hotel the food was likewise excellent . . . but that was a bit different, as we apparently had made some sort of deal, supplying the hotel with foodstuffs, as it was practically taken over by our own military and that of the British.

In strange contrast, the papers were full of the current famine and starvation in Bengal. The New Delhi *The Sunday Statesman* quoted figures of what they called "deaths of paupers" in Calcutta and vicinity for period from August 1st to October 31st . . . total deaths. 10,631. Of course that doesn't cover all of Bengal.

The Japs pulled a fast piece of propaganda in this connection . . . offering, via radio, ten or twelve shiploads of rice free to the starving Indians IF the ships were guaranteed safe passage by the British. Of course this was whipsawing the British for they dared not accept the offer. As a bit of counter-publicity they announced that Canada was offering 100,000 tons of wheat to the stricken people. There was no explanation of how such wheat would be delivered. from Canada, in time to save the starving thousands. But perhaps the announcement had its value, politically.

Meanwhile our pilot was taken very ill with malaria and went to the hospital. So we had to get a new man to continue our trip. That's one of the ever-present threats of these tropical countries . . . disease is always at hand. A few days before we had visited the local Public Relations Officer in the malaria ward . . . these wards seem always to have patrons.

Early on the seventh day we were off again. General Stratemeyer took General Hurley with him in his B-25 while the rest of us followed more leisurely in our C-60. Strangely enough for India, at this time of year (November 8th), it was COLD in the early morning . . . must have been in the low 60's . . . it felt good for a change.

We headed southeast . . . the Ganges River snaked its way through the thousands of little farms below. Over Lucknow . . . it brought back memories of Henty's books and his story of the Sepoy Rebellion, read when I was a kid. To the east the snow-covered Himalayas appeared . . . we flew almost parallel with them. Mt. Everest raises its peaks above them all, far over the haze which partially hides the

lower ranges . . . here is the "Top of the World," at 29,141 feet. The broadening Ganges left us, working its way south to the Indian Ocean. The Himalayas seemed closer . . . a solid line of blinding white snow, jutting up here and there into towering peaks of silver . . . gorgeous in the morning sun. They must have been far away . . . perhaps 125 to 175 miles . . . yet plainly visible.

At mid-afternoon we sat down in the green country of Assam . . . not far from the India-Burma border . . . on one of our bases from which our bombers work on the Japs, and from which our transport planes take off for "over the hump."

Fields of tea bushes surrounded the airport . . . "tea gardens" they call them. Our camp was rough but comfortable. We had an excellent dinner. That evening the local GI's put on a show for Generals Hurley and Stratemeyer . . . "The Upper Assam Little Latrine Players" they called themselves . . . and a darned good show it was, too. After that show, some of our party went over to one of our hospitals nearby, and an enlisted man, formerly an assistant curator in a zoo, put on an exhibition of his snakes . . . cobras, king cobras, and other venomous reptiles he had bought from the natives. He petted them, handled them . . . all except one new king cobra he said he had just gotten that day who wasn't "friendly" as yet. They told us there were tigers to be killed in the neighborhood . . . they bother the natives. Also elephants . . . they ruin the tea gardens.

But I must tell you about one of the bombers on this field. As you know, the crews of such ships paint names on their planes, and frequently pictures to go with the names, plus a bomb for every mission over enemy territory. This plane was well decorated . . . it had seen thirty or forty missions from Assam over Burma. And its name was painted in large letters, "MY ASSAM DRAGON."

Up early the next morning . . . we were called at 1:30. For we were to take off for the trip "over the hump" . . . across the rough, high Himalayas . . . between 500 and 600 miles across Burma to Kunming, China. They told us we would have to leave our C-60 at this base and go over by transport . . . as our ship had no provision



for oxygen, and that's essential for the crew at the high altitudes necessary to cross the "hump."

A stout breakfast of fruit juice, bacon, eggs, pancakes with syrup, and coffee. We ate heartily . . . one can't be too sure when one may eat again on such jaunts. The "hump" is treacherous . . . they call it the worst piece of flying country in the world. Also, the Japs had fighter bases in the valleys we were to cross . . . and they had an unpleasant habit of shooting down unarmed transports they caught crossing Burma. Several weeks before they had shot down seven of our ships . . . but none for the past week or more. Our bombers had been hitting their fields, discouraging their operations.

Nevertheless, for safety, we were to fly over before daylight . . . the Japs had never attacked at night. Hence the early rising.

Take-off time was set for 3:00 a. m. At 2:45 we drove out to the ship. It was all dark . . . no crew in sight. Returning to Operations HQ we finally found the crew . . . but there were more delays locating chutes for everyone and other details. Time was wasting . . . the night was slipping away and we had no relish for flying across in daylight.

We tried to locate the Commanding Officer . . . he wasn't to be found . . . he and his Executive Officer were over seeing to the take-off of Generals Stratmeyer and Hurley in their fully armed B-25. No one worried about us lesser lights of lowly rank.

Finally, after much discussion, they announced they were ready to take off if we would go out to the ship again. It was then 4:40 a. m. . . . daylight would arrive not long after 5:00. Reluctantly . . . and I'm afraid ungraciously . . . we agreed to go. And we clamored aboard a C-87 (cargo version of a B-24, Liberator) . . . to find it well loaded with passengers, including a Chinese General and some of his staff.

I shall never forget the little speech the captain-pilot made to us just before he taxied out for take-off. Standing in the doorway to the pilot's compartment . . . twenty-five of us passengers sitting on the floor in the dim light of the ship's cabin . . . he said simply, but gravely:

"When I start the engines, put out that light and there will be no smoking or lighting of matches. And, if anything should happen, go out of that door fast . . . one right after another. That's important."

He turned, shut the door behind him . . . almost immediately the engines started . . . we taxied out on the runway . . . the lights in the cabin were extinguished . . . we took off.

Climbing high, we headed over the first range . . . our altitude was 15,000, 16,000, 17,000 feet. It was bitter cold . . . and a broken glass in the window near me didn't help any.

Thirty minutes went by, and it began to grow light. Soon it was broad daylight. The sky was clear . . . visibility excellent . . . that didn't make us any happier. Below we saw jagged, almost sheer, rock-sided mountains. Between the ranges were narrow valleys, jungles . . . inhabited, we knew, by wild tribes of which some were known to be headhunters. This definitely is rough country.

The minutes lazed by as we scanned the horizon . . . we saw nothing except more mountains, more snow-covered peaks. The peaks were close below us. So it went for more than two hours . . . no Jap Zeros appeared. Only the cold and the lack of oxygen bothered us.

Ahead we saw a green bowl of a valley . . . a city . . . Kunming. Shortly we landed and taxied in between the P-40's, with their savage red tiger mouths painted on their snouts . . . ships of "The Flying Tigers" of General Chennault.

Immediately we went to General Chennault's headquarters . . . they said, "Go right in . . . General Hurley left orders." The General had been worried, as we were more than two hours behind our schedule . . . he did not know of our delayed take-off. Apparently he was relieved to see us.

Kunming, from the air, appeared to be a town of 15,000 to 20,000 . . . as one would judge towns in the States. We drove into the city. It literally swarmed with people . . . Chinese, Chinese everywhere. They say it has a population of 450,000 . . . judging by its crowded streets that seems reasonable. They must live like sardines

in a can. Many of their living quarters are underground, they told us. Our chauffeur had to drive at a snail's pace through the narrow streets to avoid hitting rickshas and careless pedestrians.

Soon we became aware of a stench which seemed to follow us wherever we went . . . then we noticed . . . from doorways would emerge a Chinese carrying a bucket of human excrement . . . they seemed to come from almost every door. This they emptied into large cans on carts . . . to be hauled away to the country. There are no sewers. Later we saw Chinese men and women . . . weird, wizened old people with those funny wide-brimmed, conical crowned hats . . . out on the lush-looking, garden-like fields with buckets of this fertilizer. With tin cups on the ends of sticks they ladled the stuff directly upon the green vegetables. Again we understood why our Army Docs say, "No fresh vegetables in these countries." Perhaps this explains some of the terrible epidemics they have in such countries when the people die like flies.

But to return to downtown Kunming. We visited shops, but found little of any value, though prices were terrific. We stopped at a restaurant, approved by our medical men, had tea and cakes for three of us and an orange squash for the driver . . . price \$175 Chinese . . . we gave the waiter a \$25 tip. A bottle of Johnny Walker Black Label Scotch stood in the window . . . any kind of liquor was scarce in China. We priced this . . . \$7,500 they said.

Of course that's Chinese money. Official exchange had been pegged at 20 Chinese dollars for one U. S. dollar. Actually, in the streets Chinese money changers begged to change your U. S. dollars (or English or Indian money) at a rate of almost 100 Chinese dollars for one U. S. Dollar. Anyway you figured it, it was too much.

I seem to have said a good many derogatory things about Kunming. And I almost forgot to say that this is attractive country. Kunming sits in its mountain-sided bowl . . . at an altitude of over 6,000 feet . . . with the thousands of small, cultivated fields about it a lush green. These fields are like gardens . . . from the air they make a beautiful pattern. The weather was lovely. The air crisp and bracing.

ing . . . the sun bright and warm. I didn't care for the way the Chinese live . . . but the countryside could be an ideal resort.

Early the next morning we were off again . . . this time in General Stilwell's plane, "Uncle Joe's Chariot." General Stilwell and General Chennault were both in Chungking where we were headed.

Watching from the window my attention was caught by the unusual number of graveyards below . . . more graveyards than I had ever seen before in any similar area. Then I remembered . . . the Chinese worship their ancestors . . . apparently graveyards must never be disturbed, no matter how old they are. And China is an old, old country. Later I noted the same thing was true in other areas . . . and I'm told it is true all over China. One wonders whether they have not used up so much fertile land making burial grounds that they have run short of good soil to raise sufficient food to feed their hundreds of millions.

Much of the country north of Kunming, toward Chungking, proved to be barren, rugged, and mountainous . . . in one area we saw sharp, rocky mountains scattered like haystacks rather than in ridges. Then the mountains became higher. As we neared Chungking we began to see cultivated patches of land on the mountain tops and sides. Millions of patches . . . and water everywhere, held in these terraced patches . . . apparently allowed to run down from one patch to another. The country lowered . . . ahead the Yangtze River appeared with the city alongside . . . we swung down and landed on a small strip between the mountain and the river.

Here our Generals were met by Generals Stilwell and Chennault. We drove in to town . . . up over narrow winding roads, across the hills that are Chungking.

It was a dirty day. Low clouds hung over the city, making it seem even more drab and dreary than its dilapidated houses and ugly landscape made it. We noticed innumerable caves dug into the sides of the cliffs along the road . . . some were still fresh from recent digging . . . these were the shelters they had built for protection from numerous Jap air raids.



Chungking reminded me of an American mining town . . . with ragged gashes in the hillsides . . . scrubby underbrush and weeds more or less running wild in vacant lots or open spots between the houses . . . dull, unpainted, frame buildings . . . paint seems to have been almost unknown. Homes and business buildings are, for the most part, shabby and rickety, though there are occasionally very modern edifices of stone or brick. And over it all hung the damp, dank, raw atmosphere which seemed to permeate everything with its drabness. The sun did not shine during our stay. Our people said they didn't expect to see any real sunshine until the next spring, perhaps March.

I thought I was being kidded when we were being shown our quarters on the top (third) floor of one of the HQ buildings, high on a hill. Our bunks had mosquito netting draped over them. I asked "How come?" for, being November and chilly, I couldn't imagine mosquitos being active. One of the permanent officers said, "Oh, we use those nets to discourage the rats . . . to keep them from climbing on our beds during the night." I let it go at that, as I figured that story was so much "boloney."

But late that night I awakened to hear a clawing at the window near the head of my bunk . . . in the dim light I saw a dark body jump . . . then I heard a light thud as it hit the floor. It was a rat all right. I got my flashlight . . . the rat scampered away.

The next morning another of our boys reported having felt one jump down against his bed. I went to my window . . . the only opening during the night had been a hole about 4 inches in diameter through which a small stove pipe had gone . . . enough for a rat to gain entry. I opened the window and looked down . . . the side of the house was sheer . . . approximately 30 feet down to the ground. How those Chinese rats climb such places is still a mystery to me.

For the next few days we were busy. One morning we spent at General Stilwell's house. General Hurley was living out there. We did quite a little sightseeing over the city. Parts of the town were badly broken up as a result of Jap bombings. The markets were almost bare . . . foodstuffs were scarce. We did buy a few things . . .

some nice linens and a few silver gadgets for costume jewelry. But silks, jade, real silver things . . . they were not to be found. China had been reduced to a new low. Coming home on the bus we found ourselves jammed in with a mob of Chinese that made the New York subways at rush hour look deserted by comparison . . . and the fare was \$15.00.

General Hurley had been busy in conferences with our own people and with Chiang Kai-shek and his ministers. Then we got a cable . . . telling General Hurley to return as soon as possible . . . and ordering me back also. The Cairo Conference was coming up.

We took off the next afternoon. At Kunming our party split up again . . . General Stratemeyer took General Hurley with him in his B-25 and the rest of us arranged to fly across to India in a two-engined transport, a C-47.

We were due to take off shortly after 8:00 in the evening. As we waited, I talked with the co-pilot. I asked him what chance a man would have of walking out of the jungle country between the mountains of Burma if he were forced to bail out. He looked at my shoes and commented, "You ought to have high shoes . . . those low ones will probably shake off if you have to jump . . . they usually do when the chute opens and breaks your fall."

At 8:30 we were off . . . a brilliant, moonlight night. Soon it was cold . . . in spite of the extra pair of pants I had put on just before take-off and my heavy flying jacket. The ship was going back light . . . there were only four passengers of us in the cabin. So we made beds of chutes on the bucket seats, pulled our top-coats over us and made ourselves comfortable. Looking out the window I could see the mountain tops clearly . . . the valleys were dark areas between. Checking our direction, by the moonlight coming in the windows, we seemed to be flying north of west. The hours wore on.

A few minutes after 11 o'clock the co-pilot came back. "Put on your chutes," he said. "One engine is in trouble." Then he went to the door, fixed it so it would open quickly and easily if we were forced to jump. We were a bit more than halfway across . . . not

far from the country of the Jap bases . . . somewhere over the Hertz Valley, between the Chindwin and Salween rivers.

We buckled on our chutes hurriedly. I checked my equipment . . . all I had was a canteen of water, my 45 automatic, a few extra rounds of ammunition, and a pocket knife. I drew my shoe laces tight . . . then I tied them still tighter, until my feet hurt. Those oxfords were thin-soled . . . even the small pebbles had been hurting my feet . . . but I didn't intend to lose them if I had to go down into that rough country I had seen when we had flown over it a few days before. I couldn't forget what the co-pilot had told me in Kunming.

Meanwhile the pilot had been nursing the ship. In spite of the excessive heating of the bad engine, he had kept it turning over while he climbed to gain an extra 2,000 feet. Then . . . fearful the engine might freeze suddenly . . . he shut it off and feathered the propeller. Now it became a struggle to maintain altitude on one engine . . . to hold enough altitude to clear all of the remaining high ridges.

The minutes hung on as we sweated it out . . . listening to the purr of the good engine as the pilot nursed it . . . sitting quietly so that no movement would disturb the delicate handling of the ship and cost altitude.

After what seemed like a young eternity, we saw lights ahead . . . we had crossed the last range . . . that was India below. We breathed easier . . . even if we had to jump now we knew we could walk out to civilization.

We lost altitude slowly. A lighted fighter strip showed up to the right . . . but we continued on our course . . . we had enough altitude to make our own base. A few minutes later we glided down to an easy landing on the same field we had left almost a week before.

Before I left the ship I went forward to say, "Thanks for a beautiful job of flying." You can believe I meant it. Thankfully we went to our bunks at the nearby camp. "The Hump" will always be vivid in my memory.

The rest of the trip home was uneventful. Over Agra we flew low to take a good look at the Taj Mahal . . . we circled it several

times. Back in New Delhi we bought some cashmere things, a few Chinese silks, embroidered cloth. Some of this stuff is exquisite.

Two days later we were back in Cairo. Immediately we were plunged into the frenzied preparations for the arrival of the "Big Wigs" of the Conference.

But this letter is already too long so I'll have to shut it off. When I get a chance to write again I'll try to tell you of the doings of the Conference . . . and of a trip we took to Saudi Arabia. Until then . . .

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Put".





# 3

EGYPT

12 January 1944

Dear Folks:

We have just returned from a seven-day trip to North and West Africa and, thank Allah, I find a flock of letters awaiting me after a mail famine for the past three weeks or more. Maybe it sounds strange to you to hear me make so much fuss over letters . . . if so, it's just because you can't imagine how much letters mean to all of us over here.

When I last wrote, we had just returned from a trip to Saudi Arabia. I didn't have time to tell you about that in my last letter . . . nor about the Cairo Conference. So I suppose I should go back and give you some idea of what those affairs were all about.

No sooner had we gotten back from China and India (November 16th) than we were deep in preparations for the Conferences at the famed Mena House, just outside Cairo . . . right alongside the Great Pyramid of Cheops. Press relations being such an important part of this meeting, there was much to do. And though we of this

theater could not set up the policies, as those had to be dictated by the people coming from London and Washington, we had to do much of the work.

Picture taking was a major headache . . . I personally had to handle our official photographers. We "shot" all the big wigs at one full hour session at one of the villas . . . Churchill, Roosevelt, Chiang Kai-shek and Madame and their Chiefs of Staff, both military and civil. Another day we "shot" a conference of the Joint Chiefs of Staff . . . again we took pictures of the Chinese party. Then the party moved on to Teheran. We were glad to stay behind and draw a breath of quiet peace, for the ten days had been hectic.

One strange thing about the whole set-up was the insistence upon absolute secrecy . . . no information could be sent out by war correspondents and very little could be told to the correspondents. Yet one could stop a dragoman in front of Shepherds or the Continental Hotel and he could give you a good story of what was taking place.

More than that, the Axis radio . . . from Rumania, Germany . . . soon was blating about the Conference . . . pin-pointing it to the Mena House.

It seemed certain to us that the Heinies would give us a hell of a good bombing. For the Mena House made a perfect target . . . with the greatest pyramid in the world only a few hundred yards away and both pyramid and Mena House outlined against the surrounding desert . . . it seemed impossible for the enemy to miss.

Why the Nazis didn't take advantage of that opportunity is still a mystery to me. But I'm not unhappy about it. I was glad when the whole thing was over.

We weren't so happy about the gag-rule we had to enforce upon the war correspondents. And when Reuters jumped the gun and spilled the whole story from Lisbon . . . while we were still telling the correspondents they dared not peep a word . . . well, as you can imagine, correspondents were buzzing about like a swarm of angry bees. Nor could I blame them. Fortunately for us, they were fair

enough to realize that the whole policy had been out of our hands . . . so they didn't blame us.

The whole fiasco was repeated at Teheran . . . when TASS, official Russian news agency, spilled the story from Moscow.

The party returned to Cairo . . . and the Turks came. More pictures and more press conferences with war correspondents. Finally a special press conference for Churchill . . . and the "big wigs" departed.

For the third time it happened . . . while we were still telling the war correspondents that the story of the Turkish Conference was not releasable, the Turks told the world about it, from Turkey.

Maybe you can . . . and then perhaps you can't . . . imagine just what that made us wonder. Three chances and three times we get scooped. Every country we held conferences with, scooped us, except the Chinese. I wonder if that puts our news services on a par with the Chinese . . . or whether our Americans lacked what the British said Reuters displayed in spilling the Cairo Conference story from Lisbon . . . "splendid journalistic enterprise." You figure it out.

Those weeks were one long succession of early morning meetings of such people as Roosevelt, or General Marshall, as they arrived . . . or late night departures. All very exciting . . . if one could have just one every month or so . . . but in the aggregate, all very much in the day's work.

During the conferences, we had General Chennault and General Stratemeyer as our guests at the flat for several days . . . they are grand folks. Chennault is a genuine character . . . as real as an old shoe, and no more pretentious. Likewise, Stratemeyer is one grand citizen. I like them both immensely.

One evening as we were having a movie at the flat . . . Prince Peter of Greece was one of our guests and General Stone, Commanding General of British Troops in Egypt, another . . . there was a knock at the door and, totally unexpected, in walked Ambassador Winant and Mrs. Oliver (Prime Minister Churchill's daughter), to find seats in the dark until that reel was through. Another night Ambassador

Winant stopped with us overnight . . . to rise at 4:30 a.m. to get out to his plane for Teheran.

Constantly during those weeks we had Generals, Generals, and more Generals of almost all ranks running in and out of the house. It was so bad around Mena House that Brigadier Generals rated only a little above errand boys . . . you can see where that placed a Major.

But the shouting and tumult died. We thought there would be a lull. That was a poor guess.

A few days later, on December 11th, we flew down to Jeddah (or Jidda). General Royce headed up a military mission to Saudi Arabia, which was invited down by His Majesty King Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud. You don't go into Saudi Arabia unless you are invited. It is that kind of country and the King is that kind of King. We flew across the Red Sea, just forty miles from the Holy City of Mecca. The Moslems are very fussy about any infidels getting near to Mecca . . . no infidel is supposed ever to look upon Mecca. So the rules are that you must approach the coastline at an altitude of less than 1,000 feet so that no unbeliever's eye may glance across the mountains and get a peek at Mecca.

Two plane loads of us went down. We were met by the King's Ministers and a Guard of Honor. His Majesty had placed a villa at the General's disposal. So the General, his Aide, one of the Sergeants, and I were quartered there.

The next morning at 10:00 the King formally received us in his Palace just outside the ancient walls of Jeddah. The King himself is rather an amazing person . . . some sixty-three years of age, tall, strongly built, in flowing Arabian costume . . . with colorful headdress and gold embroidered robe. He is a real King . . . he is head man because he is the best man in the Kingdom . . . having fought his way to the top by force of arms. Some years ago he and fifteen men captured the Palace at Riyadh, overpowering 165 soldier guards. He still rules with an iron hand.

That evening the King gave an elaborate banquet for the General and our party . . . and for the top members of his official family. We arrived at the Palace at seven o'clock, our time. According to



the Moslems this was one o'clock for they reckon time from sunset regardless of when the sun sets. At sunset they change their watches to 12 o'clock. So the banquet was arranged for one hour after sunset, or, one o'clock their time.

Leaving our caps in the lower halls we were ushered out and up a ramp which winds up around one side of the Palace . . . a ramp which no one ordinarily uses except the King himself. We came upon an open court on the second floor . . . the floor was completely covered with luxurious oriental rugs, and easy chairs were arranged in a quadrangle. The King was seated in the center at the far end. His Majesty greeted each one of us and shook hands. We all sat and coffee was served from a huge container, slung by a strap from the shoulder of the attendant, who poured a few sips of the strong Arabian coffee into small, after-dinner-type cups. We drank this quickly . . . though I suspect no American could honestly say he liked it. The attendant immediately poured more coffee for each one. When we drank the second helping he collected the cups, throwing the last drops onto the rug to show "that is finished."

After ten or fifteen minutes of conversation the King rose and we descended a few steps to the huge banquet hall, to a table set for some fifty people and laden with scores of dishes of all kinds of Arabian and European foods. The big feature was *ten whole sheep roasted*, standing at intervals along the length of the board. As a special delicacy they served the Arabian dish of sheep's eyes . . . so some of our party told me. They said they ate them . . . with no great relish. Unfortunately, I was not offered one. Somehow or other I was overlooked. I would have liked to have tried them just as a matter of curiosity. Perhaps on another visit I can sample them. I did eat of the many dishes and most of them were very good.

Behind the King stood his slaves and personal bodyguards. Two black fellows waved fans over his head . . . not because of the heat, for it was really cool . . . apparently merely from ancient custom. The King would raise a hand to his shoulder and a slave would place a glass of water therein . . . the King would drink, raise his hand again, and the glass would disappear.

Dinner over, the King arose. A small bottle was brought to him. With a small stick he took a substance from the bottle and painted the hands of his guests. It was his favorite perfume . . . "amber gris," they called it, or "ood." It had a strong, pungent, musk-like odor. Undoubtedly delightful to Arabians, but hardly the exact scent American Women would choose in place of "Rock Garden" or "Chanel No. 5." The odor lingered for a day or more.

Perfume, so His Majesty told us, is one of his prime interests in life. As he put it, he has three major reasons for living . . . (1) prayer (for he is head of the Moslem Church), (2) scent or perfume . . . and (3) women. He did not specify any order of priority.

We returned to the open court and the King seated himself as did we all. His fifty personal bodyguards arrayed in long flowing Arabian costumes and colorful headdresses; long, curved swords at their sides held in the left hand, were ever "at the ready." About twenty feet in front of the King stood his two special bodyguards . . . one a nice looking young fellow in bright red robe, with finely chiseled features and a fanatical look in his eye . . . always with his eyes intently upon the King, never a flicker of an eyelash or a movement of a muscle. I decided it was no time to make any funny business with the King.

His Majesty, through his interpreter, related some of the experiences of his youth and told us interesting things of his people. It was a most dramatic setting. The moon was well up in the east by this time, with the dark mountains toward Mecca silhouetted in the moonlight and the entire desert flooded with the light of the Arabian night. Truly a picture from an Arabian Nights tale.

- The next morning we again called on His Majesty to pay our respects and say goodbye. He presented the General with several Arabian costumes, a long, curved sword in a gold and silver scabbard, a wrist watch with the King's name on it. I drew an Arabian costume with a dagger in gold and silver scabbard. Every member of the party got at least an Arabian outfit. Meanwhile some of our party
- had taken the King's brother and some twenty members of his Official

Family for an airplane ride in the vicinity of Jeddah. Before noon we were off again and on our way back home.

One of the most interesting parts of our visit to Saudi Arabia, from my standpoint, was that I got quite well acquainted with the King's Charge d'Affaires of the Foreign Office, Gamil Daoud El-Mussallamy . . . a most pleasant, intelligent fellow of perhaps thirty or thirty-five years. We were dinner partners at the banquet and spent considerable time together otherwise. He speaks English as well as I do (better I suppose . . . mine is American) . . . is a graduate of the American University in Cairo. As we were about to step into the plane to leave, Gamil asked me if I would write to him . . . I told him I certainly would . . . I meant it and I certainly shall.

Of course upon our return to Cairo the war correspondents wanted to know all about the trip. So a few days later I told the story to the regular press conference of approximately seventy-five correspondents. Then the Egyptian State Broadcast people called and asked if I would go on the air for fifteen minutes. This I did on Sunday eve, December 19th. They recorded it and rebroadcast it the next noon. So I got a chance to listen to myself. And, to brag of it, I thought I was good. To expand my ego, I got a lot of nice compliments.\*

Incidentally, we took John Phillips of *Life* Magazine along with us as our official photographer. John tells me that *Life* is running a spread of these pictures of the Saudi Arabian trip in the January 10th issue. Perhaps you will get a chance to see them.

During that week General Patton stopped in at our quarters several times, so I got a chance to observe him more. He is a big tall man, very sure of himself . . . almost to the point of cockiness . . . but with it all a very pleasant person to meet. I got the very definite impression that he knows what it is all about. Regardless of the recent controversy about him, I suspect he is much too good a soldier to be lost because of an unfortunate incident.

On December 21st we flew over to Alexandria, where we had a flag-raising at one of our ordnance outfits. This was my first visit

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\*The full text of this radio story is found on page 94.

to Alexandria, so I enjoyed seeing the town and the activity in the harbor.

On the 22nd we received an invitation from King Farouk. Some twenty-eight officers of us went out to the King's private hunting grounds and shot ducks for several hours. I never saw so many ducks in my life. In spite of the chance you will think I am a Baron Munchausen, I believe I must have seen upwards of 100,000 ducks in the air at one time . . . the sky in all directions was literally black with them. But the weather was bad . . . it rained and the ducks did not fly low . . . so we shot for only two and a half hours . . . each man having his own individual blind and a couple of natives to assist him. I managed to knock down only about eleven ducks. That is considered rotten shooting. They tell stories of people who have shot as many as 300 in three hours. But the best any of our party got was twenty-four.

Of course, from day to day, there are many war correspondents coming and going through this area. I was interested in having Dave Nichols, Richard Mowrer, Robert Casey . . . all of the *Chicago Daily News* . . . to the house for lunch recently. Those of you who read the *News* will remember seeing Dave Nichols' byline from Moscow. Bob Casey, of course, has been reporting from all over the world. Mowrer has been located here in Egypt.

Christmas and the holidays came and went with little of the usual atmosphere as we have it at home, but nevertheless we managed to find something interesting to do. On Christmas Eve we were invited, the General and I, to the house of Prince and Princess Pierre of Greece. The party was slated for 9:30, so after an early cocktail party the General and I went back to the flat and were playing gin rummy all by ourselves awaiting time to go to the next party. The door bell rang and I went to the door. A civilian stood in the doorway, his face strangely familiar, yet I could not recognize him. I invited him in, and the General was equally puzzled as his manner indicated. Finally, however, he spotted who it was . . . King Farouk. He had fooled us because he had just shaved off his beard . . . previously he had quite a garden of foliage over his chin.



The story is that he became so exasperated when the Queen gave birth to the third youngster and it turned out to be a girl that he shaved off his beard. We all sat down and had a drink—the King drank his usual Coca-Cola. At least so far as we know, he never takes alcohol, in line with the Moslem policy, but he does like Coca-Cola. As Farouk was going to the same party we were headed for, we all went down in his car. The Prince's party was quite an affair—some seventy-five people. Mostly Egyptians, with a good many Greeks and some British, but the General and I were the only Americans. We had an exciting time and even got to singing some good old German Christmas songs just for the hell of it and they seemed to enjoy it.

Christmas morning we opened up our Christmas boxes at breakfast time. Then we hurried out to the airport and took off for Jerusalem, where we had a Christmas broadcast scheduled from Bethlehem and Jerusalem. In the latter part of the afternoon in Jerusalem we did a little sightseeing, visiting the Wailing Wall and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and walking through many of the narrow, dirty streets of the old city. That finished, we drove out to Bethlehem and at the Church of The Nativity we put on two broadcasts, one of seven minutes and one of nine minutes with a soldier choir of some forty voices and the General making a talk. It all went off very well, and from reports it apparently got good reception in the States. I was not too pleased about all this, as we had set up a really good broadcast all our own but finally we had to sandwich this in as part of a world-wide hook-up from the service men from the overseas theaters. However, I hope some of you had a chance to listen in.

The next day we spent the entire morning sightseeing. We visited Bethlehem again, saw the Church of The Nativity, back to Jerusalem, past Rachel's Tomb, to the Mosque of Omar, to the Garden of Gethsemane, to the Church of All Nations, up to the top of the Mount of Olives, and to the Church of the Ascension. That afternoon we flew back home.

On the 29th of December, the General organized a party of some twenty people and we flew up to Luxor and the ancient city of Thebes. On this trip we were guests of King Farouk while at Luxor

and Thebes. His emissary met us with cars, drove us into Luxor, where we took an old yacht . . . powered by a model T Ford engine . . . across the Nile. There ancient cars awaited to take us to the Valley of the Kings. We visited the tombs of Amenophis II, Seti I, and Tutankhamen. The tomb of Amenophis was particularly interesting—down some 100 steps into huge chambers . . . numerous rooms and ancient hieroglyphics and pictures in their original colors, still in amazingly good condition and splendid in workmanship. Also we went to the tomb of Queen Nefertari Mienyut, the favorite wife of Rameses II, then to the Temple of Medinet Abou, where we had lunch in a strange court of ruins where Christians as well as sun worshipers used to worship.

We drove back and stopped at the Colossi of Memnon. Back across the Nile, I did a little shopping and then took in the Temple of Karnak. It is an amazing place. How these people ever built these huge pillars of solid marble and the obelisks which run up to sixty feet or more is hard to understand. In short, I enjoyed this trip immensely in spite of the fact that I had gotten to be pretty much of a “case-hardened” sightseer. I even fell for a scarab bracelet which the King’s emissary assured me was made up of seven genuine ancient scarabs. He gave me a written translation of the hieroglyphics on the back of each . . . telling in what dynasty each was made. All are thousands of years old. Maybe I was a sucker, but I felt that since we were guests of the King, the King’s emissary would hardly dare to pawn off any phoney stuff on us.

The next day we spent in Cairo, and in the evening we took a trip through the “Burka”—which is the “tenderloin” of the city—in company with the Provost Marshal and the British officer who is Chief Deputy to the Chief of Police of Cairo. Dirty, narrow, dark, filthy streets, reeking with ugly smells and dirtier people . . . “the oldest profession” is practiced on a level that could hardly be lower anywhere else in the world . . . this was the essence of the “Burka.” We also visited the police station, and the condition of these people and the manner in which they live, are handled, and die, is pathetic beyond the imagination of anyone who has never taken a “look see.” Never-

theless, it was an interesting side light on some of the things that go on, and, I daresay, they go on in somewhat this fashion in the New World as well as in this part of the globe.

New Year's Eve we went out to a nearby field for dinner with the Commanding Officer, one Colonel Clarke, and after dinner at his quarters we went over to the Officers Club to look in on their party. From there we came back into town and made a stop at Headquarters Officers party, and then on to the New Year's party at Princess Chevikar (an Egyptian Princess). This was quite an elaborate affair, 100 to 150 people . . . among them King Farouk, King George of Greece, King Peter of Yugoslavia, Prince Peter of Greece. I was amused at being introduced to Princess Chevikar and having her say, "Oh yes, I remember you—you were over at Prince Pierre's party." There is little doubt that her reason for remembering was the Heinie songs we had been singing.

The next day, New Year's Day, Joe E. Brown came to town and put on a show for the men. It was a good show, and after the show Joe and his two side kicks came over to the flat for dinner with us—this was our New Year's turkey dinner. Joe is a splendid type of fellow, not only a good performer and a good comic, but he talks talk that makes sense and is doing a swell job entertaining the troops.

Monday morning early, January 3rd, we took off for North Africa, in the General's plane, and for the next seven days we kept pounding it pretty hard all the way over to Dakar and back. That means better than 8,000 miles traveling, and we spent more than forty-five hours in the air. General Meloy of the Air Transport Command was with us a good deal of the time. We stopped in and saw something of Tunis, Algiers, Oran, Marrakech, Dakar, Casablanca, and Bengasi. This was my first real trip through North Africa beyond Algiers, so it was intensely interesting to me. From Algiers down toward Marrakech we flew along the coastline most of the time, but always within sight of the rocky, high, Atlas Mountains which are completely snow covered at this time of the year. They are beautiful and they rise up to some 12,000 or 14,000 feet in places.

From Marrakech we cut south across these mountains, flying through a pass at 10,000 feet, with peaks on either side of us higher than we were. For an hour or so we flew out over foothills and then across the Great Sahara. For hour upon hour we flew over the desert; nothing except sandy, flat desert country, broken by rough, hilly, rocky terrain. Finally we picked up some straggling vegetation and then down through the Senegal country, where we picked up a river and saw some signs of human habitation . . . for hours across the desert we saw nothing but one or two outposts which were primarily stations of the French Camel Corps. There certainly is a lot of real estate down there that not even a Hollywood promoter could glorify. Casablanca, Oran, and Algiers are fairly good looking cities. They are almost as truly French cities as though they actually were in France. Of course, they have been pretty hard hit by the war . . . the towns and the people show the results of it.

Coming back from Algiers we brought with us Lt. Col. Melvin Purvis, who is with the Provost Marshal's office there. If you don't remember that name, just remember John Dillinger and the man who headed the F.B.I. office in Chicago when Dillinger was killed . . . in fact, the man who personally led the several men who actually killed Dillinger . . . that's Purvis. He flew back with us and has been staying at the house since then. He is really a swell gentleman and most interesting type of fellow. He is small, rather sleek and quiet in appearance, and certainly not the type that you would take for "Gang Buster No. 1." It has been very interesting to get him to tell his story of "the lady in red," who gave information that led to Dillinger's killing, and also to describe his own participation in the episode. He says he was "scared as hell," and I quite well believe it. Also he tells some most interesting stories of his experiences with "Yellow Kid Weil." Doubtless you all know who Weil is.

Last night we had a very interesting dinner at the house—among our guests were Mr. and Mrs. Wissa, who are very wealthy Egyptians, descendants of the Copts. If you don't know what Copts are, reach

for your dictionary. Briefly they were the earliest Christians in this part of the country, and were the original Egyptians. Only their descendants can truly be described as genuine Egyptians descended from the early "settlers." Nobody states that they came over in the Mayflower to Egypt, but if there had been a Mayflower, I suppose the Copts would have been on it. Also we had Ambassador J. A. Barboza-Carneiro of Brazil and his wife, both of whom are very interesting and attractive people. I told the Ambassador of having met his fellow countryman, Decio de Paulo Machado, way back in 1927, when I took him on a flying trip out to the Rocky Mountains. The Ambassador did not enthuse too much about this, although of course he had known Machado. I suspect they are probably on different sides of the political fence in Brazil.

So much for now. That brings us practically up to the moment. If anything worthwhile happens in the future, I will try to write you again and tell you about it.

Meanwhile, remember, if you want to keep on getting letters from me you had better start writing to Egypt.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Put'.

P. S. Reading over the above, I note that I forgot to mention another interesting dinner which I attended, with the General, at Sheppard's Hotel in Cairo. We were guests of Ambassador MacVeagh. He is our American Ambassador to Greece. Among his guests were King George and Crown Prince Paul of Greece. I had met the King and the Crown Prince previously, but this was my first real opportunity to talk to them and get some idea of what they are really like.



Curiously enough, Crown Prince Paul is not the son of the King, but his brother. Both of them are very attractive men and very interesting to talk to. Of course, they speak English perfectly and their entire manner is very democratic. A few days ago we were wandering through the Mousky (the native bazaar section), where there are thousands of little stalls that sell everything—some very fine things and some very poor. It is a rather squalid section. But we ran across King George, in military uniform, strolling through the bazaar all by himself.



## MISSION TO SAUDI ARABIA

A Broadcast by: MAJOR RUSSELL L. PUTMAN, A.C.

Egyptian State Broadcast, Cairo

8:15 p. m. Sunday 19-12-43 and 20-12-43

at 1:15 p. m.

Many years ago as a kid, I used to get excited by the tales of Arabia which we all read. Back in those days, in the small Ohio town where I grew up, Arabia spelled mystery and adventure. I imagine it meant much the same thing to you, or at least to those of you who, like myself, lived in lands far away. Perhaps, like myself, it took a war of world-wide proportions to bring you here to the Middle East, where the strange ways of the East rub shoulders with our customs of the West.

So, naturally, it was with keen interest that I anticipated a trip to Saudi Arabia . . . a trip to meet the King himself . . . for one does

not visit this Kingdom without the express permission or invitation of His Majesty King Ibn Saud.

May I tell you something of the trip itself . . . of the reasons for our visit . . . and then perhaps I can also tell you something of the things which impressed us most. I hope in this way I may be able to give you some of the impressions we carried away with us.

A week ago Saturday we left Cairo. Our party was an American military mission, headed by Major General Ralph Royce, Commanding General of U.S. Army Forces in the Middle East. The object of our mission was to meet with His Majesty and his Ministers . . . to discuss with them ways in which our country might co-operate with them for the mutual benefit of our peoples.

I won't attempt to explain the geography of this flight . . . doubtless you know that Saudi Arabia lies to the Southeast of Cairo, between the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. We flew in two planes. Our course lay over the desert, the barren, rough hills or small mountains, down the shore of the Red Sea and then across the Red Sea itself to the City of Jeddah. It is rugged country all the way . . . rugged in the sense of desert wastes, rough hills. And near Jeddah itself the desert still persists . . . as far as the eye can see the sands continue except where the brown barren mountains rise to the East, toward Mecca. It is four to five hours by air from Cairo to Jeddah . . . some 800 miles.

Upon our arrival, we were met by representatives of King Ibn Saud . . . the King himself was still in Mecca, where he had been for sometime for the annual pilgrimage. A guard of honor awaited General Royce. The King had instructed that a villa be placed at the General's disposal and to this we went at once. It was a very modern house, fitted with the luxurious carpets and furnishings of the East . . . located on the shore of the Red Sea, on the outskirts of the city.

Sunday morning the King drove down from Mecca, some forty miles away. And at ten o'clock he received us in his palace which stands a few kilometers outside Jeddah's gates. Sunday evening the King entertained with a banquet for our American party, Mr. Moose, our American Minister at Jeddah, and the British Ambassador, Mr. Jordan. It was a spectacular affair. Some fifty people sat at table

. . . the colorful costumes of the Arabians in sharp contrast to the uniforms and civilian dress of us Westerners.

Monday morning General Royce and party again visited the King . . . to pay our respects and to say goodbye . . . while at the same time some of our people took the King's brother and others of the King's official family for a plane ride in one of our ships. Before the morning had worn away we had said our last goodbyes and were again in the air, Cairo-bound.

It was only a few days. Yet so much happened, so much that is so different from what we are accustomed to, that it is obviously impossible to attempt an adequate description of it. But maybe we can cite a few things that will give something of a picture of what the country is like, what the people are like, what the King himself is like.

Arabia, or this part of Arabia, is desert country. Rugged, barren mountains rise up to 8,000 or 9,000 feet along the eastern shore of the Red Sea to the north. To the east of Jeddah rises a mountain range, shutting off the Holy City of Mecca from the flat coast. But your main impression of the country is desert . . . and you marvel that people can provide themselves with a livelihood in such a land . . . trees there are none, vegetation there is so little as to seem non-existent. The camels nibble at scraggly bushes that struggle through the sand and somehow eke out an existence.

It is a land of camels, and goats, and donkeys . . . those small fellows who pull prodigiously to haul the heavily laden carts. Of an evening, as you drive from the city out to the Royal Palace you see hundreds of camels, which you noted during the day lying in great groups along the road, now being loaded with burdens and lined up into trains . . . and in the evening shadows they file out noiselessly, on their long trek across the desert sands to destinations you cannot guess.

We asked our Arabian friends, "But where do the people of Jeddah get the food that keeps them alive? Where does it come from?" They told us it came from "outside," explaining that while some vegetables and fruits were raised in certain parts of Arabia, much of it had to be imported. Naturally there is meat; for the

animals do get along somehow on the limited vegetation. Then we asked, "But where do you get the money to pay for these imports?" and the answer was, "From the Pilgrims."

The Pilgrims . . . The Pilgrims who come from many lands, as near as Egypt and as far as India and the Philippines, to worship at Mecca. Formerly hundreds of thousands came each year . . . today, under war conditions, the number is greatly reduced. Jeddah is the only nearby seaport to which Pilgrims can come on their way to Mecca . . . and railroads there are none. Autos are a rarity in the land.

Just as the Pilgrims are the dominant factor in Jeddah's economic life, so does religion seem to be the dominant factor in the whole life of the country. And the King as head of the nation is at once the head of the Moslem Corps. He is the ultimate in power, in civil and in religious matters . . . if in fact the two can be divorced in Saudi Arabia . . . for the law of the land is religious law.

But beneath those strange flowing robes, and those headscarfs beneath the woven hair "halos" which keep them in place, they are friendly, intelligent people who welcomed us warmly, showered us with courtesies and kindness. True, we met only those of what might be called the ruling class. True, also, there seems to be no great "middle class" as we know it. But there are no hard and fixed class distinctions.

King Ibn Saud is a splendid example of what can happen in Saudi Arabia . . . he is King by virtue of his prowess as a fighter and his intelligent handling of his people. He fought his way to power over tremendous odds . . . he holds his power through sheer strength of character. And the very fact of our Mission being in Arabia, discussing such questions as betterment of public health, better communications, better education of his people . . . this is an indication of his intelligent desire to bring Saudi Arabia to a more modern and a higher living standard.

A visit to His Majesty's court is truly an experience. Here in his palace, furnished in oriental splendor, you meet a Monarch with all the trappings of olden times. Approach his audience chamber and you pass between some fifty personal bodyguards . . . in full Arabian



regalia, stern of face, impassive, with daggers at belt and curved swords at their sides . . . with the left hand keeping the sword ever at the "ready."

The King is a powerfully built man. Well over six feet tall . . . well set up . . . and though no longer a young man, he still shows a sturdiness of body that bears witness to his vigorous life. He is gracious . . . smiles play over his face as he listens to a tale or as he relates some experiences of his youth.

Coffee is served . . . from a huge container slung over the attendant's shoulder . . . in tiny after-dinner-type cups. Strong Arabian coffee with its own strange flavor . . . strange to an American taste. Only a few sips are poured . . . you drink them quickly . . . the attendant pours another . . . then collects the cups, throwing the few remaining drops on the rug to show that that is finished.

Most fascinating of all was the evening banquet. Leaving our caps in the lower hall, we were escorted outside of the palace and up a ramp that curved up and around one side. It was an hour after sunset . . . one o'clock Muslim time. True the sun does not set the same time each day. Nevertheless the Muslim sets his watch at twelve as the sun sets, and "Time marches on" from that point for another twenty-four hours.

But to get on . . . darkness was made less by a brilliant full moon that rose in the east . . . and we came upon a wide open court, on the second floor . . . carpeted with oriental rugs . . . with easy chairs in a quadrangle. At the opposite end sat the King, gorgeous in his colorful raiment . . . his fifty bodyguards at his side. We were greeted by His Majesty, took our seats as His Majesty sat, and coffee was served. Ten to fifteen minutes later, at a signal from the King, all rose and we descended to the great banquet hall.

What did we eat? The piece de resistance, if it may be so called, consisted of ten whole sheep roasted, placed upon the table at regular intervals . . . and between these sheep, there were scores of dishes . . . of fish, beef, or camel meat, chicken, okra and tomatoes, custard, rice with meat . . . and others I could not name. But the great delicacy, so it was said, was a sheep's eye. Some of our party ate them . . . I claim no such distinction. But I still hope for a return engagement.

Behind the King stood his personal servants and his favored guards . . . two servants kept fans in constant motion, not because of the heat, for it was cool, but apparently from ancient custom. The King would lift his hand to his shoulder, a glass of water was placed therein, he drank, raised his hand and the glass disappeared.

Dinner over, the King rose . . . a small bottle was brought to him . . . with a small stick His Majesty drew out some of the contents, and painted the palms of his guests. It was his favorite perfume . . . "amber gris," they called it, or "ood." A perfume of the East . . . heavy with a musklike flavor . . . and a persistence that remained for many, many hours.

We returned to the open court . . . and again his guards took their places. Twenty feet in front of His Majesty stood a young guard, in flowing red robe—with finely chiseled features, eyes that fairly burned with fanatical loyalty to his King . . . not a flicker of an eyelash, not a muscle that moved, not a turn of the head. Thus he stood, watching his Master intently during the entire episode. Truly, this was no time for any false moves toward his King.

Again we had coffee . . . and conversation. Through his interpreters His Majesty regaled us with stories of his fighting youth, and of the qualities of his people.

The full moon climbed higher . . . the desert was flooded in its full light . . . to the East, toward Mecca, the dark shapes of the mountains were silhouetted . . . a light breeze played with the tapestries. Colorful oriental costumes, colorful men of the East in friendly companionship with the stern military dress, the modern men of the West. It seemed but a bit of imagination, wrapped about with the magic of the soft Arabian night.

Saudi Arabia and America were close together that night . . .



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EGYPT

29 January 1944

Dear Folks:

It hasn't been very long since I last wrote one of these "community letters," but I think I'd better try to get one off now while I seem to have a little time . . . and before the letter gets too long.

After writing the last letter I remembered several things that I thought I might have told you but which I overlooked, about our trip to West Africa the first part of the month. At Marrakech, for example,

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we met up with Maj. Gen. "Jimmy" Doolittle and his Chief of Staff, Brig. Gen. "Pat" Partridge. Of course Jimmy and Pat and the General are old friends and I have known "Pat" a long time and quite well and Jimmy also, though not so well. So we all had dinner together and swapped a lot of tall stories. It so happened, too, that Prime Minister Churchill was in Marrakech at the same time . . . No, he didn't come to dinner . . . but then he had pneumonia.

As we were having a drink in our rooms at the very modern hotel there, a strange beating noise attracted our attention and on opening the window we discovered that it was some sort of tom-tom drums, and with it there soon came a weird chant . . . all seeming to come from a Native Quarter which was only a few blocks away. It grew louder and louder and kept on for an hour or more . . . apparently some honest-to-goodness natives having some sort of tribal dance. We didn't go to investigate . . . we couldn't . . . for that section of the city is "out of bounds" to Allied personnel, and since it was dark by this time it would probably have not been too healthy for "furriners." But the whole business rather made your spine curl up . . . " 'twarn't human."

Shortly after our return from the West we went down into the Native Quarter here for a lunch of "kebab" at an old-time native restaurant called "Agaty's." It is in the "Mousky" or native bazaar section . . . and our Army Docs frown, in fact they say "naughty, naughty" to anyone going down there to eat, thought it is not actually forbidden. The Docs predict all sorts of dire things will happen to your digestive apparatus if you eat native food . . . especially vegetables.

But we went down . . . the General and Colonel Purvis and myself with an Egyptian, one Mr. Eid by name, a General Motors representative here. Down a narrow dirty street of the Mousky . . . turning off into a much narrower and filthier street . . . and into a doorway past a stack of meats piled high on a counter beside a grill. Here they make the "kebab" . . . chunks of young veal or lamb put on skewers with vegetables in between and grilled over the fire. We went on upstairs . . . to a fairly decent room full of a few Europeans, more Egyptians in their red fezzes or "tarbooshes," and a few Arabs in their flowing robes, headdresses with "halos."

Soon the food came . . . great plates of "kebab" and vegetables, native pickles, rounds of native bread . . . like a huge bun about 10 inches in diameter, only hollow . . . and believe it or not, the food was excellent. We soon lost our aversion to the surroundings and were wading in as eagerly as were the Egyptians. For dessert we had a strange sort of pudding whose name I forget . . . but when I was a kid I would have said it was corn starch pudding.

I believe that the biggest kick I got out of this trip . . . aside from genuine enjoyment of the meal . . . was the fact that in a few short months we had already "gone native" to the extent that we could enjoy eating down there. I know very well we would never have done it last September when we arrived here. Which proves, I suppose, that it all depends on what one is accustomed to . . . and many things are far better than we think simply because we aren't accustomed to them.

Oh, I almost forgot . . . the Flight Surgeon made us take pills when we returned, to prevent "Gyppy Tummy," as they call it here. Whether the pills helped or not I don't know. But none of us had any ill effects.

The next day I went out to King Peter's (Yugoslavia) villa with Colonel Purvis, as he had an audience with His Majesty. It was interesting mainly because the King was practically tongue-tied in the presence of this "Gang Buster," and very interested in getting Purvis to tell of some of his experiences. After all, His Majesty is just a lad and apparently like other youngsters.

For a few days we had comparative peace and quiet . . . then more VIPERS descended upon us (VIPERS here means "Very Important Personages" . . . originally shortened to V. I. P.'s . . . then someone made it VIPERS . . . and, by and large, the name suits). This time it was Nelson Eddy and his accompanist, Ted Paxson. They stayed at the flat with us . . . spent four or five days giving shows in nearby camps, as far away as Suez, and on Friday evening (January 21st) they put on an excellent show here in town. Eddy had a light cold, but it didn't hurt him really, and he sang a swell program of "Great Day," "Tain't Necessarily So," "Volga Boatman," "Largo,"



"Song of the Flea," and many others . . . and of course, on request, sang "Rose Marie." Paxson is no mean pianist . . . and he did several good numbers.

The previous night we were having several Staff Officers in for dinner and a movie at the flat . . . and again, in the middle of the movie, the door bell rang and in walked King Farouk with his Aide. Of course, when the movie was finished the King didn't go home . . . he never wants to go home . . . so we all stuck around. Finally, Nelson Eddy and Paxson returned from their evening's show at an outlying camp . . . and the King apparently was as much interested in meeting Eddy as vice versa. The King has a sense of humor all his own and gets quite playful . . . so he dropped his cigarette lighter on the floor and told Eddy to "pick it up." Eddy did so . . . as he said later, he felt it was a royal command . . . and as he reached for the lighter on the floor His Majesty stepped on Eddy's hand, and laughed uproariously at his "little joke." Eddy said, "I was a bit awed by His Majesty at first . . . but when he dropped his cigarette lighter, told me to pick it up, and then stepped on my hand . . . well, right then he became just another fellow named Joe."

But the King had to have his fun . . . and his eats too. He has a most inquisitive mind and a most husky appetite, so he was soon out in the kitchen hunting through the ice box. He found a cold wild duck, left over from dinner . . . and with this and other odd scraps of food, he proceeded to sit down at the kitchen table and have himself a lunch.

The day after Eddy's concert here, we were up early and off on a trip to Syria, and The Lebanon and Palestine . . . Eddy left the same day for a concert tour over in the Persian Gulf, but he plans to be back in a few weeks.

We flew up the east coast of the Mediterranean . . . past Tel Aviv, Haifa, Tyre and Sidon, Beirut, then cut inland and landed at Aleppo. It is plenty cool up that way . . . much of the time we flew along snow covered ranges . . . the Lebanon and the Anti-Lebanon Mountains . . . and they are no weak imitations of hills either. They run up to 10,000 or 12,000 feet and have plenty of heavy snow covering their

sides. It was beautiful . . . snow covered ranges and peaks with brown and green valleys between.

At Aleppo we visited the ancient Citadel and the "Souk" . . . here they use the term "Souk" to mean the "Mousky" or the bazaar. But we were not especially impressed, and didn't buy anything. The next morning early we were off . . . our car windows (for now we drove) frosted over, and that is quite an experience after one has spent the winter in Egypt . . . our destination, Damascus. It was an interesting drive . . . treeless plains, with only an occasional tree or small grove planted by some native . . . always the snow covered mountains in the background . . . villages frequently . . . of the strangest sort of houses . . . we called them "beehive houses," for they were shaped just like a beehive, only a bit taller and thinner, and were made of baked mud. When we stopped to take pictures or just look, we were immediately surrounded by natives, dressed in what to us seem outlandish costumes . . . those baggy pants that must have been designed to outdo or end all baggy pants. But they were friendly and grinning and apparently more curious about us than we were about them . . . for this is pretty much "back country" . . . and Americans are definitely curios. We drove through Hama . . . stopped to see the famous old "norias," or waterwheels, built by the Romans some 2,000 years ago. They are huge things . . . 30 feet or so high . . . and they pick up the water from the small river, lift it, as they turn from the flow of the river, and deposit it in the high aqueduct which carries the water off to the plains to irrigate the fields. These old Roman aqueducts are still much in evidence across the fields. A real example of early engineering and imagination. And the old norias still turn and pick up the water.

At noon we stopped at Hamas, a city of good size, and had a rather good lunch in the railroad station. Lunch places are tough to find in such country . . . first, there aren't many . . . second, most of the native places aren't fit to eat in, even if you could stand the smells, sights, etc. They are grand breeding places for dysentery . . . against which the natives have apparently built up some immunity, but which is tough on an outsider.

More hours of driving and we are up into the mountains, through snow covered fields . . . striped tents of nomads along the road . . . there an unusual sight, *a camel train plodding along through the snow* . . . somehow that doesn't seem right, for I never associated camels with snow before. As evening comes on, we run down into a broad valley . . . trees here, great orchards of olive trees, flowers, etc. And so into Damascus . . . a rather modern city with much evidence of French influence, for of course the French have run this country for years.

We stopped at the Orient Palace Hotel . . . very modern. Soon a delegation of three French officers arrived to pay a courtesy call on the General and invite him to various functions tomorrow . . . also local O.W.I. representatives and the Acting American Minister from the Legation. Early the next morning we drove off to inspect the local "Souk" or bazaar . . . this is of course in the old native section and in fact, the main street of "The Souk" is "The Street Called Straight" which is famed in Bible history. We were very much intrigued with their stuff . . . for this is the world's center for the manufacture of fine brocades and also turns out some fine work in leather . . . also, since time immemorial, the *Damascus blade* has been the high standard of excellence in cutlery steel. Whether their modern steel is still the leader may be open to question . . . but the reputation still persists. So we bought . . . stretching our pay until the pockets hurt . . . brocades, slippers, daggers, and filigree silver work.

Noon found us on our way out to the Air Field to a luncheon given by Colonel Alouette (Yes, that's his name, believe it or not) and several other officers of the French Army and French Airlines. They put on a good show . . . we even sang "Alouette, Gentille Alouette" with the Colonel joining in lustily . . . and the French sang "I've Been Working on the Railroad."

Back to town . . . and off to a visit with General Catroux, French Leader in this area . . . much flourish of drums, field music as we arrive . . . a pleasant half hour with General Catroux and Staff . . . and General Royce did himself proud throwing his French around, for Catroux doesn't speak English.

Direct from this visit we went to the Official Residence of the President of Syria . . . President Shugri El Kuwatly. Coffee, talk through the interpreter as the President speaks Arabic. He appears to be an intelligent, attractive man . . . but, they say, politics in these areas is genuinely tough.

That evening, after dinner, we again drove to "The Souk" . . . down a winding street, into another, and, leaving the cars, down more narrow streets, and into a low doorway, through a passage, out into a courtyard, now covered over with canvas. We were quite a party . . . some fifteen people . . . including several French officers with their wives, some Red Cross girls and some Army Nurses. The women were not permitted to remain in the main courtyard . . . they had to go on out to a secondary courtyard where they could see in through the barred windows.

The program was already in session . . . rhythmic beating of a tom-tom, or tambourine type drum, chants in high-pitched, wailing voices . . . "singing" from the Koran. Soon after we were seated, three dancers, in long flowing robes, took places in the center of the floor . . . for this was a session of "The Whirling Dervishes." Two of the dancers wore white robes, signifying that they were full-fledged Whirling Dervishes . . . the third was a boy of eleven years, in blue robe, the sign of the novice. He has been dancing only since he was four. To the left stood a line of men . . . the "chorus" . . . opposite this line were a drummer and the chanters, the latter taking turns in the "singing." The drum warmed up, beat faster, the chanter sang more vehemently, the "chorus" repeated the chants and bent their bodies forward or turned right and left in unison and to the rhythm of the drum. The dancers whirled in place, never moving from their spot more than a matter of inches . . . whirling ever in place with a simple, smooth, foot movement, never raising or lowering their bodies but seeming to whirl effortlessly as a top, hands against lower chest at right with palms flat in . . . now they raise their arms to the side, slightly above the horizontal and rest their heads on one arm as though going to sleep . . . but the whirling continues. Eight or ten minutes of this . . . the dancers retire and the chorus takes up the chant and

the bending and swaying more excitedly . . . the dancers return and for another five to ten minutes they "take over" again . . . at last an elderly, bearded, civilian-dressed man takes the floor and in slow measured pace he does the "Whirl." He is the "Head Dervish" . . . yes, they are a real organization . . . a branch of the Moslems who believe that by whirling they get nearer to God . . . their dancers are specially trained . . . they work and live as groups, and they say they always "care for their own," that there is never a hungry Dervish . . . and that they are good citizens. There are supposed to be 2,000 to 3,000 of them in the country.

The whole program was finally over . . . after about forty-five minutes. This was not, I judge, a particularly "hot" session . . . maybe the weather was too cold. One of the O.W.I. men from our Legation tells me they often go for hours of constant dancing.

It was cold and bright the next morning as we drove out of Damascus . . . up into the mountains which form a backdrop for the city . . . in twenty-five minutes, we are running through snow, though the road is clear. We climb high, twisting, tortuous roads, none too good . . . snow piled four to five feet high in places. An hour later we are down in a valley, between the two ranges . . . Turning north we drive to Baalbek . . . ancient site of Temples of Jupiter, Bacchus, and Venus (What, no Temple to Song? No, they overlooked it). The ruins are impressive . . . but after all, these are lands of ruins, and we do not tarry too long. After lunch we are away again, up over the second range . . . again winding, hairpin turns . . . much snow . . . a Caterpillar Diesel snowplow stands at a station near the summit. A little more than an hour later we see brown mountains ahead, contrasting with the solid white around us . . . and there ahead the blue Mediterranean and the City of Beirut. Twenty minutes more and we are in the city . . . a French city, really . . . and go to a very good modern hotel, The Normandy.

Almost immediately we call upon Mr. Wadsworth, the American Minister. And the next morning, after a trip to the American University and American Hospital, we go with him to visit Sheik Besara el Khouri, President of Lebanon, at Government House. Again, great



flourish of trumpets, soldiery, field music . . . and in to the President's chamber. He is a keen individual, blue of eye, medium of stature, fairly heavy. He is the hero of the "Lebanon Incident" of last November, when the French imprisoned him and his cabinet for five days . . . he emerged far more popular than before. Orange juice, coffee, French cakes . . . and much conversation.

Back to the Legation for some business talk, and then off . . . in the rain which has been falling all morning . . . for Haifa. But before leaving Beirut I must tell a little more about this American University at Beirut.

This is a most modern University . . . with courses in the Arts and Sciences, in Medicine, Commerce, and a Nurses Training School run in connection with the American Hospital, which is really part and parcel with the University. The campus is beautiful, lying against the hills of Beirut, which continue on up to the snow clad Lebanon Mountains to the east. They have some 2,000 students . . . of all races and creeds.

I have met a great number of men . . . Arabs, Syrians, Egyptians, etc. . . . who have gone to this American University or some other American University here in the Middle East . . . such as the American University in Cairo . . . men of importance in Governments, etc., such as my friend Gamil Daoud El-Mussalamy, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs in Saudi Arabia, and they all speak highly of the University or Universities . . . and naturally they have a high regard for America and Americans because of their education in these schools. I am convinced that these schools are doing a great work for these people over here . . . I believe they are doing a great work for America . . . I believe they are doing the greatest single piece of work that has ever been done to bring about, in this "Tinder Box of World Affairs," a condition that will eventually bring all peoples closer together and help avoid future wars. I believe, also, that if we as Americans did more of this sort of education instead of trying to force our ideas of politics or religion on these or any other people that we would achieve far more that is good than we can achieve, under present conditions, in any other way. In brief . . . I am immensely impressed . . . and I hope we

can do more of this sort of thing and less of "meddling" with other countries' politics.

But, to continue . . . we drove down along the coast of the Mediterranean through the ancient cities of Sidon and Tyre to Haifa. And, as we drove into Haifa we saw our plane flying overhead coming in for its landing to pick us up and take us back home.

Landing at our home base just at dark we were met by Major General Giles, Chief of Air Staff for General Arnold . . . who was staying at our house. And we also found when we got home, in another flat in our house . . . there are several flats leased by the Army . . . Col. Oveta Culp Hobby, Chief of the WACS, and her assistant, Lt. Col. Betty Bandel, also of the WACS. They all had dinner with us that night and left us the next day.

Of course the General had to show General Giles and Colonel Hobby some of the things we had bought at Damascus. General Giles immediately spotted some of the knives I had bought and wanted to buy two of them to take back as presents to General Arnold. Yes, he got them . . . who am I to say NO to the Chief of Air Staff? And Colonel Hobby admired the knives also . . . so I gave her one, and one to Lt. Col. Bandel and another to General Giles' Aide. Colonel Hobby admired the brocade which I had bought . . . wanted to know "Is your wife a blonde?" I allowed as how "She's a Swedish blonde." Colonel Hobby allowed "She ought to like this." Then she inquired where my wife lived, and when I said Michigan, she said, "I guess she wouldn't mind if I had a dress of the same material," and I agreed. So she asked if we might be able to buy her material of the same bolt for her to have a dress. I told her we would take care of that as the General is planning another trip to Damascus soon.

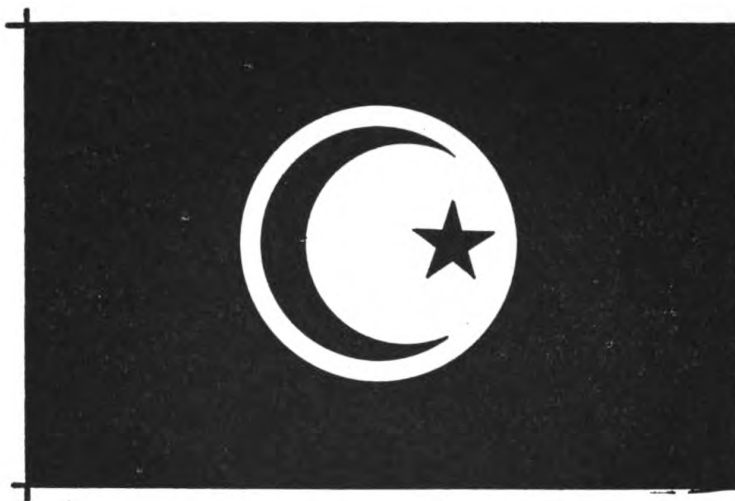
Last night we had a small dinner party at the flat, with a movie afterward, and our principal guests were the King of Greece, George, and his Aide, Major Copenmichalos (I hope I spelled it right). During the movie we had a phone call announcing that Luise Rainer and her party had just arrived . . . and they came to the house too . . . how long they'll be here I don't know.

Tomorrow will be a big day . . . General Royce will be presented the Distinguished Service Medal, for the job he did with the First Air Force last April-August, just before leaving for the Middle East. Gen. Patrick Hurley, who has just returned from Persia and Afghanistan, will make the presentation . . . General Hurley also is our house guest.

So endeth another chapter. I promised this letter wouldn't be too long . . . I'm afraid I haven't kept my promise. I hope I haven't bored you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Pat", likely representing Patrick Hurley.



5

KING'S X, MICHIGAN  
30 March 1944

Dear Folks:

Temporarily, I am back in the States. I started one of these letters three weeks ago, but it never got finished for we were plunged into the hurry-hurry of changing our base of operations to another War Theater . . . and I had also to prepare for this trip to the U.S.A., en route to our new assignment.

So, first of all, I'll rewrite what I wrote over there . . . and then I'll try to bring you up to date on what we have been doing and seeing with the aid of the "log" I keep from day to day.

(7 March 1944)

This letter is being started in a plane, flying high over the desert wastes of Iraq . . . the sun has been up just one hour but we've been in the air four hours, flying through a full-moon, Persian-Iraqian night into a perfectly glorious morning.

It's hard to say when I'll get this letter finished . . . for when we get home late this afternoon we'll be in the midst of the hustle of

last-minute things to do before we shove off for another assignment in another theater. So this will be my last letter from the Middle East. Before another will be written, a lot of things will be different with us . . . a lot of traveling will have been done . . . we'll be in an entirely different land and clime.

But before I get going on what has happened during the past five weeks since last I wrote, I want to digress a moment . . . and try to "set the record straight" . . . well, anyhow, straighter . . . on some of the questions some of you have been asking in your letters.

A number of you have written: "Boy, what social lions you alleged soldiers are!" "Don't you ever do any work?" "Is that the way this war is being fought?" "Don't you ever think of us poor taxpayers when you throw around our money on such activities as you tell us about?" "Is this a social War?" "Is there any military activity over there?"

Sure, I get it . . . a lot of it is just "good clean fun," ribbing me. That's okeh with me . . . go ahead and enjoy it. But I can't help wondering whether possibly you cannot fully appreciate what this situation is over here. On the chance of boring you, by telling you something you do fully appreciate, I'm going to say "a few words" . . . well chosen, I hope.

First . . . do we ever do any work? Well, not too much. For example . . . this morning we were called at 2:45 and at 4:00 a. m. we were in the air. We shall stop at Damascus for some six or seven hours and then get to our home base about 5:00 p. m., to our quarters about 6:00. At the moment we have no plans for the evening but the chances are about three to one that before we have dinner we'll find there are some VIPERS (Very Important People to you) in town who must be invited to dinner and "set up with" until midnight. (NOTE: Actually this happened before we even got home.)

A typical day "at home" starts at HQ at 8:00 a. m., runs to 5:00 or 6:00 p. m. . . . and the evenings (seven out of eight) are taken up with VIPERS of some sort.

Who are these VIPERS? They may be visiting American Generals, or British or French . . . or "Brass Hats" from Washington . . .



or a stray Ambassador or two . . . or the Greek, Yugoslav, or Egyptian King. Just last week we had Deputy Air Minister S. L. DeCarteret and Air Vice Marshall Nairn, Ottawa, Canada, with us for three days.

"Isn't that great fun?" I hear you say. Sure it is . . . for a while. But when it happens day after day, week after week, and month after month . . . well, no matter what fine people they may be, no matter how interesting they are, it gets to be just plain work like anything else. AND . . . they aren't always delightful or interesting . . . but they must be treated gently just the same.

"Why do we do it?" Did you read about the situation here in Egypt when Rommel was practically at Cairo's gates . . . some fifty miles away? Many important and influential Egyptians actually hoped Rommel would lick the British and take Cairo and all Egypt. Not that they were really "Pro-German" . . . they just hated the British so much for the treatment they had received at British hands . . . and they felt that most anything else would be better than British domination.

Did you know . . . and do you remember . . . that in Burma the natives helped the Japs . . . and in Java also the natives aided the Japs when they invaded? And in India? . . . but surely you know that story.

In short . . . in War, as in Peace, the people who dislike or hate you rarely ever help you. Sometimes your friends will. Unfortunately, not all of the United Nations have friends in all of the places it would help to have friends.

Most of us recognize the horse sense of cultivating friends . . . rarely can we do business successfully with our enemies.

In war you don't win simply by force of arms. Hitler is finding that out. The enemies he has made in conquered countries, and elsewhere, will unquestionably play a most important part in ruining his plans for a "Planned Europe."

Do I make my "alibi" clear? If I haven't, I can't . . . so I'll cease and desist . . . and you can darned well think what you please.

But bear with me for just one more comment. Most of what we do, of a military nature, is obviously something we can't write

about . . . of course you know that. So about all that is left to write about are the non-military activities . . . and I try to tell you of those things which have a human interest slant in hopes you may find them interesting.

The past five weeks we've been "home-bodies," comparatively. Oh yes, we've been about a bit . . . to Syria, The Lebanon, Palestine . . . down to Saudi Arabia to see King Ibn Saud again (that's where we've been on this trip) . . . out to ancient Memphis and Sakkari to visit the oldest of the Pyramids, etc. But most of the time we've been at home. So instead of giving you a running account of where we went and what we saw, I'd like to vary the formula a bit and tell you more of some of the impressions one gets over here . . . and perhaps tell you a story or two, true stories however.

But we are approaching Damascus . . . the Anti-Lebanon Mountains stand out behind the city which nestles at their feet and runs part way up their sides. In a few minutes we'll be down . . . so this must cease until later.

#### KING'S X, MICHIGAN

(Now . . . March 30th . . . I'm sitting in front of the fire in the big fireplace of our house in the country, looking out over the little lake which comes to within 100 feet of our front door. It is a dark, rainy day . . . just right to be here . . . with the trees of the forest which surrounds us, dripping. I am "loafing" out most of the leave I have . . . and am I enjoying it.)

Leaving Damascus, that afternoon, we varied our course slightly to fly over the Sea of Galilee . . . Capernaum there at the head of the Sea, Galilee to the south, and Nazareth over west, where Christ lived. On south, Jerusalem and Bethlehem to the east . . . over Tel-Aviv, the newly developed city of almost 500,000 made up mainly of wealthy and many well educated refugee Jews from Europe. Here is the center of the Jewish-Arabian controversy over who shall occupy and dominate Palestine. They say the situation is tense . . . that Jews and Arabs alike are arming . . . that when once this War is over, if military control is relaxed, there will be a bloody struggle.

Landing at our headquarters base, we started for home. A car cut close to ours . . . hands waved at us . . . several French officers, one of whom is in command of the Fighting French Military Airlines in this part of the world. We had missed them in Damascus . . . so we invited them to the flat for dinner and the evening. They are fine fellows . . . one of them, Lieutenant Bernheim, is of the French family that owned Bourjois, the perfumery house, a most likable fellow. Their lot is rather tragic, for they are doing their best to rebuild France's prestige against terrific odds . . . and who knows what France's status will be when the peace is achieved.

Looking back over my "log," I am reminded that several weeks ago General Royce was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal . . . for service as head of the First Air Force while we were at Mitchel Field, Long Island. General Hurley came back to town . . . from several months at Teheran, Iran, and up into Afghanistan . . . and he did the honors before a full parade of troops at a nearby field.

General Hurley stayed with us again at the flat. He is one of my favorite Americans . . . a keen mind, quick Irish wit, and intensely patriotic. He is doing a grand job, as best he can under the circumstances, to see that the U.S.A. doesn't get a "rooking" in this War and in the Peace settlement to follow.

As I said before, General Hurley took me with him when he went to India and China last fall . . . so I've gotten to know him quite well. One evening while we were talking at the flat I told him, half seriously and half in jest, that, as many notables had occupied the room in which he was staying, we felt that that room deserved a name worthy of it . . . and that we were having a bronze plaque made, bearing the inscription, "The General Hurley Room." We bandied this idea about. And as a result I actually did have two plaques made . . . one inscribed "THE GENERAL HURLEY ROOM," the other, "GENERAL HURLEY SLEPT HERE." Then, while General Hurley was away for the day, on a short trip to Jerusalem, I had these hung . . . one on the door of the room and the other over the bed Hurley occupied. On his return the General was flabbergasted . . . but pleased, as one could see. We horsed him about being the "Modern

George Washington.” And to cap it all, I had John Phillips, *Life* photographer, take pictures of both of these signs in their places. From that time on no guest of ours left without having visited “The General Hurley Room” and viewing, with awe, the place where “General Hurley Slept.”

Memphis and Sakkari, sites of the earliest pyramids . . . and of a small Sphinx . . . are not far away, and we went out to see them, with Zaki Bey Saad as our guide. Zaki Bey Saad is Director of Antiquities for Egypt and has had much to do with the excavations hereabouts. The pyramids are not so large as those of Giza . . . the “Step” Pyramid being the most noted because of its peculiar “step” appearance . . . it is crumbling badly. Of course we visited the numerous tombs. But the most interesting thing here is the “Serapeum” or “Tomb of the Sacred Bulls” . . . for they worshiped the bulls as sacred in ancient Egyptian days. Here are huge underground mausoleums . . . 26 separate mausoleums for the Sacred Bulls, carved out of solid rock, some 30 to 50 feet below the surface. Each Bull had its own solid granite sarcophagus, approximately 7 feet wide, 8 feet high, and 12 feet long. Each had a lid almost 3 feet thick. What would they weigh? You guess. The thought staggers my imagination.

Referring back to General Hurley . . . I almost forgot to tell you an amusing story which Hurley tells on himself. During the weeks that General Hurley was in Teheran, where he went before the Teheran Conference and where he stayed for some time thereafter, he became very friendly with the Iranian (Persian to some of you) Minister of Protocol . . . a man named *Faik* and pronounced as we pronounce “fake.” During this time, Minister Faik became the father of a new baby boy. And, to express his admiration for General Hurley, he named the boy *Patrick Hurley Faik*. Hurley isn’t sure he cares to have that fact too widely known in the States.

King Farouk “threw” another duck shoot . . . this time I didn’t get to go, as someone had to stick around HQ in case anything unusual happened. But General Royce tells an interesting story. It seems they arrived at this little Arab town . . . an oasis out in the desert . . . well before dawn. A small tent city had been set up, an

elaborate breakfast was served for His Majesty and his guests. As they came from the tents out into the darkness a terrific commotion was noticed nearby . . . which, on investigation, proved to be the struggle of local Arabs with a huge bull which they were sacrificing in honor of His Majesty . . . this being the King's first visit to their village. With sharp knives they slit the throat of the bull, held by other natives . . . and with great bellowing and struggling the bull bled to death. A weird scene in the pre-dawn night.

But these Egyptians are not all low caste desert Arabs . . . nor strange people of bloody customs. Major General Attallah Pasha, Chief of Staff of the Egyptian Army and so its actual head, invited the officers of our HQ to a cocktail party and reception at the Egyptian Officers Club . . . a beautiful building in downtown Cairo . . . and of course all of his staff attended, many of them with their wives. (Full fledged Moslems don't usually bring their women out in public . . . but many of these people are not Moslems . . . and many of them are very modern Moslems.) The affair was done in excellent taste . . . food was excellent . . . and one might have thought himself in the States except for the red "fezes" or "tarbooshes" on many an officer's head and the strange uniforms. As to the women . . . well the gals in the States would have to "get up and dust" to outdo these Egyptian gals in either quality of clothes or good taste . . . needless to say, these women all dress in European style.

And when it comes to sheer friendliness and courtesy . . . well, we simply can't lick these Egyptians. They are some of the nicest people it has ever been my good fortune to meet. And we've gotten to know quite a lot of them. For example: there's Samir Zulfikar Bey, a wealthy landowner. He has a fine town house and when you are his guest there isn't anything in the world he doesn't do to make you happy. One Sunday a number of us drove down with him to one of his farms in the country, some fifty miles from Cairo. Over crude roads, past ancient type water wheels, turned by oxen walking in a never-ending circle, their eyes blindfolded (whether to keep them from getting dizzy or to keep them from going crazy at this monotonous job . . . I can't say) . . . the wheels lifting the water from



the main canal to irrigate the nearby fields. Hundreds of ragged workers were in the fields . . . for they do intensive cultivating in Egypt . . . and it isn't Sunday to them. The main house a three-story affair, not unlike our early Colonial houses . . . big rooms, high ceilings, cool. A splendid dinner . . . one of the "surprises" was a dessert made of sweet potatoes with cream . . . looked like a fancy, cream covered pudding . . . tasted strangely like chestnuts . . . it was swell.

After a lazy afternoon we prepared to start back, when the host amazed us by presenting us with a whole young sheep, which he had had killed and dressed since our arrival, just as a token of courtesy.

I had quizzed him about his "little farm" here. He said it was 360 acres . . . he had only fifty workers on it . . . land value approximately \$400,000 and that is fifty miles from Cairo. No I didn't hear wrongly. They tell me that farm land near Cairo sells for as much as \$2,000 per acre. I don't know just how they arrive at such values. But my guess is that (1) labor is almost without cost, the people are practically on a slave basis, they get nothing but a bare living, and a VERY bare one at that; (2) land is scarce, for Egypt is nothing but a narrow strip of fertile irrigated land along the Nile, with great deserts along either side; (3) with intensive cultivation, and cheap labor, they produce food stuffs that sell high in Cairo markets. All of which seems to add up to unbelievable values for land.

Samir Zulfikar Bey . . . we called him "Tex," for he is a graduate of Texas A. & M. . . . talks perfect "American" and I wouldn't ask a nicer person to be with.

Then there is Edourd Wissa, another wealthy landowner who owns most of a great Oasis called El Fayoum, southwest from Cairo about seventy miles . . . many, many acres and hundreds of workers . . . many of them strange looking creatures . . . women with rings in one side of their noses and huge pots or bundles on their heads. He and his wife are Copts . . . the earliest Christians that inhabited Egypt . . . speak perfect English . . . are wonderful hosts . . . know almost as much about America as we do, though they have never been in the States. They know Europe inside-out.

But I'm drooling along too much . . . what I want to say is that I have grown very fond of the better class Egyptians . . . they are fine, intelligent people. True, their views on handling the "laboring classes" do not agree with ours, but they have been brought up under vastly different conditions. And . . . when you note that Egypt has really been dominated by the so-called highly civilized English with their much touted high standards for all people . . . and note that this influence has been largely instrumental in keeping Egypt's lower classes depressed . . . well then it hardly seems wise for us to heave too many rocks at Egyptians.

When I left Egypt I felt I was leaving many, many good friends behind in a land that was most hospitable . . . and I hope I can return there again before too long.

One Sunday afternoon we were surprised by a phone call advising that Lt. Gen. Ira Eaker and party had just landed at the airport . . . from Italy. They came to our flat and stayed with us, for some days. During his stay we went out . . . again with Zaki Bey Saad, the Director of Antiquities, to see some of the diggings they are working on. But these were on the east side of the Nile and were poor graves . . . you see the Egyptians buried their rich folks far to the west, toward the setting sun which meant Death or the exit to the next life. Only the poor, who could not afford graves far to the west, were buried on the east bank of the river . . . and so there was little in these graves except skeletons, some poor pottery, and some fairly good beads and necklaces. It all seemed like "grave robbing" to us. On this trip we took King Peter, of Yugoslavia, with us . . . after having him to the flat for lunch with his aide, Colonel Skrivanic.

An amusing incident happened at this lunch. General Royce and I had been "horsing" quite a lot at lunch about things we liked to eat . . . such as "Oh, my people were always great salt eaters . . . in fact, an Uncle of mine always carried small chunks of rock salt in his pocket" . . . etc., etc. So I made a wise crack to the effect that "My favorite dish, though, is mustard on bananas." We kidded about that and dropped the subject. Soon Peter brought up the subject again . . . and we kidded some more and dropped it again. But

Peter was not to be denied. He again brought up the subject, insisting that he'd like to see someone eat bananas. So, I was caught. But with great bravado I called for Hassan and asked if he had any bananas in the house. Unfortunately he said "Yes." So I told him to bring them . . . and to bring the mustard. Peeling the banana I spread on a goodly gob of mustard . . . and, now with considerable curiosity myself, for I had never tried the combination, I took a good bite. SOOPRIZE!! It wasn't bad at all. I said so. They didn't believe me. General Royce tried it and agreed, "It isn't bad." But King Peter wouldn't take a chance. Apparently he thought he was still being kidded. (If you think I'm kidding . . . try it yourself. 'Tain't bad.)

During this lunch General Eaker mentioned the fact that he had climbed the highest Pyramid . . . Cheops Pyramid of Giza, near Cairo . . . some 23 years before . . . and he would like to climb it again. So we agreed to go out the next day and climb it.

This is no mean trick for anyone . . . least of all for anyone like General Eaker who climbed it "23 years before." The pyramid is 551 feet high . . . from top to base, not along the slanting edge where you climb. You climb up at one corner . . . the stones are about two and a half feet high so you can't step up but must climb up, hauling yourself up one by one and each one an effort. Also there is very real danger of falling . . . either from dizziness, weariness, or slipping . . . and one misstep that would start you falling would most certainly end by killing you. Quite a number of climbers have been killed.

But we went out about 4:00 the next afternoon . . . General Eaker, General Royce and I, and members of General Eaker's party. Some of the party dropped out after a short climb . . . but General Eaker, General Royce, and several others of us kept on to the top. We climbed up in twenty minutes . . . which isn't too fast but isn't too bad for some "old novices" . . . but the professional guides out there claim they can go up and down in eight minutes.

Arriving at the top another surprise awaited us . . . there was King Peter. He greeted us with, "Well, I beat you up here." He had

listened to our talk the day before at lunch and apparently got a kick out of beating the "Big Generals" to the top.

(Secret: We came down in 15 minutes without mishap. But the next day . . . and especially the second day after . . . the fore muscles between knee and thigh were so sore none of us could walk without wincing.)

The day General Eaker left, General Royce flew back with him as far as Bengazi, but I stayed at home. I invited some of the staff officers to the flat for lunch and, as we were sitting down to table, the door bell rang and in walked King Farouk. I explained that General Royce was away . . . but he stayed anyhow. So he had a "coke" . . . I invited him to stay to lunch and he accepted gladly . . . in fact he stuck around with us until 4:15 that afternoon (one doesn't walk out when His Majesty calls, until HM decides he is ready to go. Matter of fact, I did leave . . . to go to airport to pick up General Royce on his return, but the others stayed on to entertain the King.)

The King came back that eve again . . . at 9:00 o'clock to take us to an affair he knew the General was attending . . . and the next eve Farouk called in again and spent most of the evening . . . and the next evening after that (*believe this or not as you wish*) he dropped in unexpectedly when we were having dinner for King Peter and Ambassador MacVeagh . . . and stayed for dinner. That made four visits in three days. All unofficial . . . all unannounced previously.

That last dinner I mentioned was really given for Edwina Eustis, a very good singer who came over with U.S.O. . . . a star of Radio Hall and the Metropolitan, or so I understand. She put on a concert at the local hall and we invited King Peter and Ambassador and Mrs. MacVeagh to attend. After the concert we all came back to the flat where dinner was waiting . . . and, as I said, we found King Farouk there. We invited him to stay and he accepted. We thought that just made up a full table of twelve guests . . . BUT, alas and alack or something . . . we missed our count. Apparently both Royce and I forgot to count the guest of honor, Edwina Eustis, and her accompanist, Miss Carley. So when we went to the table all was confusion . . . the General, with two Kings on his hands, started seat-

ing people (we observed no rigid protocol in our house) and suddenly discovered that all seats were filled and he hadn't even given a seat to Ambassador MacVeagh.

So two of us had to "eat in the kitchen," for the table wouldn't stretch any farther.

Then General Royce turned the situation into a good laugh by exclaiming to Ambassador MacVeagh, "Well, Mr. Ambassador, I believe that's a new low for any American General . . . to invite an Ambassador to dinner and then forget to give him a seat." MacVeagh got a big laugh out of it . . . as did everyone . . . MacVeagh is a swell person and not one of the stuffed shirts one finds so often among diplomatic people.

The weather here has been perfect for the past two months . . . January and February . . . in fact, so perfect one almost forgets there is any weather. Cool, a bit snappy in the mornings . . . we sleep with blankets each night . . . by noon it is warm, almost hot if you get into the sun too much . . . by eve it is perfect, never requiring a topcoat if one goes out. This is the nearest to a perfect winter climate I have ever seen . . . and I hope to come back here after the war to enjoy it again.

We have been notified that General Royce is to leave the Middle East . . . and I am to go along . . . now we await General Giles' arrival . . . shortly thereafter we'll be on our way.

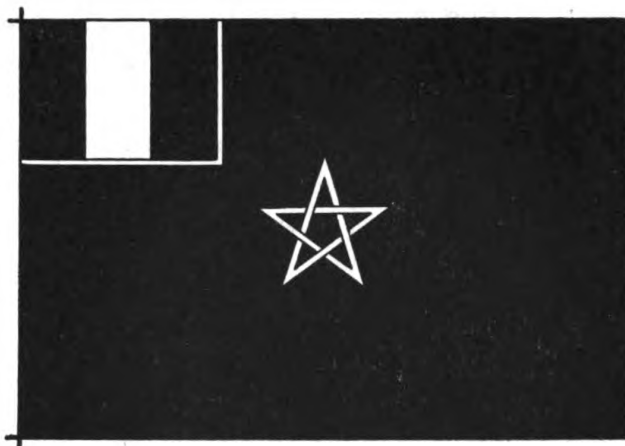
But this letter has already grown too long . . . I won't try to tell you more until another time . . . I'll try to write again in a few days and tell you of our move, our trip to the West Coast of Africa, my trip to the States and so on.

Until then, adios . . .

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Put".





6

KING'S X, MICHIGAN

1 April 1944

Dear Folks:

Today we have a snowstorm, and a good one, up here in Michigan . . . and I am still "loafing" in front of the husky fire on the edge of the lake. It is swell to see snow again, especially when one doesn't have to go out into it. But that's a long way from the warm sands of Egypt, where I left off this yarn a few days ago. So let's go back to the warmer climate.

I've been doing a lot of bragging about Egypt's wonderful winter climate . . . and in all fairness I suppose I should tell you of the sand storm we had on February 17th. The wind whipped up the desert sands all morning and by noon it was really getting bad . . . yellowish dust swirling in the air all over town . . . by late afternoon it was almost dark long before the usual time, sand particles got into your eyes so you could hardly see . . . just like a good old West Texas sand storm. It was a dirty day and no fooling. But that was the only bad sand storm we saw in our six months plus in this country. Occasionally we did have some wind and sand, but nothing really bad except this once. And the next morning all was calm, clear, and serene.

The King had a birthday . . . February 11th . . . his twenty-fourth birthday. And, to celebrate the event Nahas Pasha, Prime Minister, threw a party at his palace . . . a great place with expansive grounds. Everyone who is anyone in Cairo was there . . . Egyptians, British, French, Arab Chieftains in colorful garb, Russians, Greeks, Yugoslavs, and Americans . . . a huge party of some hundreds. All gathered in the great halls until the doors were thrown open to the dining hall where long tables were set, in a rectangle, filled with tea, sweet soft drinks, coffee and cakes, appetizers and sweets of all sorts. But the most interesting part of all was when the elite had eaten their fill . . . then the "poor folks," the servants and the poor off the streets, were allowed to come in and help themselves. They came in like a pack of ravenous wolves . . . gathering the skirts of their galabias (hope I spelled it right . . . that's what they call the "night-shirt-like robes" they wear) they literally scooped the food off the table into the skirts and left hurriedly to eat their fill elsewhere.

The King? Oh, he wasn't there. You see he and Nahas Pasha are political enemies . . . Nahas Pasha plays hand in hand with the British in their program of domination over Egypt . . . The King opposes these activities and is actually the head of a so-called "popular party," which wants Egypt to be truly free and independent. So, to avoid complications, the King had gone out of town, to Upper Egypt, purportedly to visit the malaria-infested regions. This the papers reported.

Speaking of these various ministers and political heads of Egypt, Negumi Pasha is one of the most colorful. He is a Major General in the Egyptian Army and so a "Pasha" . . . is of Sudanese blood, I understand . . . and is almost as black as the proverbial "ace of spades." It is he who always heads up the King's shoots, for duck or whatnot . . . and he runs the local zoo in Cairo which is a mighty good one, too. We met Negumi Pasha on numerous occasions and one day he took General Royce and me out to see the zoo . . . a special reason was to see a young lion cub, recently born in the zoo, which they had named "General Royce." He (I mean Negumi) is a most charming fellow . . . well educated . . . speaks English perfectly

. . . talks on almost all subjects . . . in short he is splendid company. But, though he is black, he has no real negroid features . . . his face and figure are as finely molded as any white man. In his company you have no feeling of any difference of race.

Another most interesting person is General Paget, newly arrived Commander in Chief of British Forces in the Middle East. We went to his house for dinner one evening and I had the good fortune to sit at his left and so had an excellent opportunity to talk with him. He is charming . . . a real soldier of the old school, but with all the grace and charm of a polished diplomat and the keen intellect that's supposed to go with such traits. What interested me most was that Paget is not of that rabid school which feels that Britain has a right to everything . . . and that American and all other nations should be happy to be hand-servants to her. In short, "he sold me" . . . I wish I could meet many more such Britishers . . . I believe it would help tremendously in the relations between America and Britain if more officers were like him . . . would mean much toward good relations after this War.

Unhappily, from my standpoint, we seemed to meet too many of other types. For example, I was best man for my Executive Officer, Captain Jacob, when he married a most attractive South African WAAS (their Army women), and at a pre-nuptial dinner of the immediate wedding party, the Chaplain . . . a Scottish Colonel . . . insisted on asking me what I thought F.D.R. would do about running for a fourth term. As I am in the Army, I ducked the question. But he persisted until I replied, "I think he may run if he feels he can win the election." The Padre expressed surprise, "But surely he will win if he runs . . . won't he?" I answered, "I really don't know." He came back again with, "But he's done a perfectly marvelous job." And I answered, "Yes, I can see how you would feel that way . . . you look at it from your international standpoint . . . but, you know, we have many internal problems as well as international ones." And then he came out with that timeworn crack (where was it invented?) "But surely you Americans wouldn't change horses in the middle of the stream, would you?" My answer was, "Well, you people did." He

looked dumfounded and said, "Oh, but no, we never did." I asked, "What about a man named Chamberlain?" And his amazing reply was, "Oh, Chamberlain, why he died." My comment was, "Sure, he died. But didn't he die a long time after Mr. Churchill replaced him?"

The conversation shifted abruptly to another topic.

Not more than four or five days later, at another dinner, a British Major plied me with the same questions . . . in almost identical phrases . . . I answered as above . . . and again the subject changed abruptly.

It seems strange what an intense interest the British have in our political affairs . . . not an academic interest either . . . rather an almost violent interest which suggests that we, as Americans, *must* handle our political affairs as they wish it.

Another incident illustrates some of the problems which confront us in our relations with many of the Allied troops overseas . . . problems which I sincerely hope can be done away with, for there certainly is no good reason for their existence. Not long ago I received a phone call from King Farouk's Aide . . . asking if General Royce would care to invite His Majesty to a private showing of Seversky's film, "Victory Through Air Power." You see, we get all such films, have a regular film library and a movie theater (a little one), where such films may be seen.

I assured His Majesty's Aide that the General would be only too glad to have the King as his guest for such showing at any time His Majesty might elect. Further conversation developed the fact that a high British military official (whose name I shall not mention as it is too well known) had invited King Farouk to see this picture *at our American Film Exchange Theater*. However, Farouk did not want to accept this invitation . . . he is not enthusiastic about the British, to say the least . . . but he did want to see the picture . . . hence this request.

King Peter recently awarded some decorations to a number of our American officers . . . some half dozen of them. General Royce received the "Karrageorge Star" of Yugoslavia, "with Swords" . . . the highest decoration they give, except for active combat operations. Also Peter gave Royce the Yugoslav pilot's wings. After this ceremony

we were invited to a very excellent dinner and to see a movie . . . all this at King Peter's villa . . . a small group of fourteen officers all-told, Yugoslav and American. The Yugoslavs are very attractive, pleasant people . . . Peter is just a boy, and has never had an opportunity to prove how "heavy" he may be. And with the political maneuvering, swinging of Allied support from Mihailovic to Tito, it doesn't look too good for Peter's claim on his throne.

Also, the Russians staged a party . . . on Red Army Day, February 23rd, . . . a "tea," and they really served tea and cakes . . . but there was also hard stuff from Groppis (leading Cairo caterer). But no caviar or vodka appeared . . . guess the "Ruskys" saved those delicacies for themselves. A great throng of Egyptian, British, American, French, Greek, Belgian, and Russians . . . military, diplomatic, and civilians. Strange bedfellows these Wars make.

We had an interesting evening on February 26th . . . a big charity affair staged for the benefit of the sick of Upper Egypt, and King Farouk was one of the chief patrons . . . no doubt I should say he was "the chief patron," for Kings never are on a par with anyone else, at least not in their own countries. King Farouk and his Aide, Lieutenant Commander Atif, called at our flat at 9:00 p.m. to take us to the shindig. We all sat at the King's table . . . and, halfway through the evening's entertainment we all went with him to an "inner-circle" show in a smaller inside room where they had dancing, singing . . . and one or two of the famous "Nautch Dancers" did their stuff. It was rather mild, frankly. Far more interesting was the awe and intense interest with which the entire assembly watched every move of the King . . . and we, as "hangers-on" to His Majesty, were also objects of curiosity . . . and I suspect of envy.

I was particularly pleased to have a chance to get somewhat acquainted with Dean James Landis, who was one of our party . . . he came to Egypt last summer to head up certain Lend-Lease activities in the Middle East. He is a very human sort of person . . . obviously has a quick, keen head on him . . . and is good company. He seems to be doing a pretty good job, too . . . from all we could gather he is really looking out for Uncle Sam's interests as best he can, under

the circumstances. I imagine he has learned a great many things which look different over here from what many people imagine in the States. (Also, Barboza-Carneira was with us . . . he's Ambassador from Brazil . . . a grand fellow . . . always good company.)

Speaking of such matters . . . a strange, to me at least, phenomenon has been taking place in the Egyptian English language newspapers over the past four or five months. Of course these papers are run by the English or British. I have been puzzled to observe that every few days there is some sort of story . . . news feature or editorial . . . dealing with "Peace Plans" or "Peace Ideas." In view of the many claims of how long this War must go . . . of the dangers of considering any peace proposals . . . vehement denials of any overtures ever being made to any enemy . . . well, you figure it out. I can guess . . . but of course I don't know . . . I'm just a soldier (perhaps more accurately, I'm only a civilian in uniform).

We had the good luck a week ago to meet Deputy Minister for Air for Canada, S. L. DeCarteret and Air Vice-Marshal Nairn . . . both from Ottawa. They spent several days here, and a good deal of time with us . . . they are on a tour of Canadian forces throughout the Middle East and to the Far East. Both are great fellows . . . I liked them immensely. We Americans have no difficulty understanding and getting along with the Canucks . . . and it seems to work both ways.

After many weeks of anticipation, Brigadier General Giles . . . the new Commanding General who is taking over . . . arrived from England on March 1st. Immediately there started a series of events to acquaint General Giles with the local situation and local people. The next eve we had Air Marshal Park and Air Vice-Marshal Toomer in for dinner (Park is head of R.A.F. in Middle East) . . . and King Farouk dropped in after dinner and spent the evening.

The next day a full parade at one of the nearby camps with awarding of decorations to a number of R.A.F. officers, American officers and enlisted men. By some strange freak of fate my name got on the list for a "Legion of Merit" . . . allegedly for meritorious service as Public Relations Officer of U. S. Army Forces in the Middle



East, especially for activities during the hectic days of the Cairo Conferences. You probably remember the bad mess that happened when, after all American (and other) war correspondents had been denied any opportunity to tell the news of these conferences, Reuters "broke" the story from Lisbon. That put us back of the "eight-ball" plenty . . . but we, as P.R.O. for American Forces, were not allowed to handle the matter . . . and it was quite a trick getting the whole press relations situation back into some sort of order without disastrous results from all the war correspondents concerned, and to the serious detriment of our Command. Naturally I got a big kick out of the award. Colonel Wild, our Adjutant General, hit the right note when he said, in congratulating me, "Now all you have to do is try to explain to the folks back home what you got it for."

You will remember our trip to Saudi Arabia last December. That had to do with discussions of Lend-Lease for Saudi Arabia. And now finally these discussions had resulted in action . . . to the extent that a "token shipment" was to be made to King Ibn Saud, of some rifles, ammunition, helmets, etc. General Royce very much wanted to make this trip before he left the Theater, since he had instigated the action . . . and he delayed the trip until General Giles could go too, to meet with King Ibn Saud.

So on Sunday, March 5th, we took off and flew to Abadan . . . spent the night there, and got off before daylight the next morning, at 5:00 o'clock, and flew down the Persian Gulf to Dhahran. Here we stopped for final information . . . for the plan was to meet King Ibn Saud out at his desert-oasis camp, some ninety miles north of Riyadh, his main capital.

There is no airfield near this spot in the desert where the King was camped . . . no airplane had ever landed near there. So three men had been sent out ahead, several days before, in a jeep to drive to the oasis, locate a place in the desert where the sand was sufficiently smooth and firm to permit our large plane to land.

Arriving at Dhahran . . . Headquarters for Arabian American Oil Co. . . . we learned that the men in the jeep had not yet arrived at the oasis . . . they had had car trouble . . . this information came

from the two-way radio which they had in their jeep. But they hoped to make the spot shortly and so we took off, depending on radio contact with the jeep to tell us that they had arrived, and had found a suitable spot for landing. We flew for an hour and a half . . . the jeep had been three days covering the same distance across the unbroken desert . . . we saw no sign of vegetation or human habitation . . . except occasional scrubby bushes . . . a distance of approximately 250 miles by air line. We established radio contact with the jeep . . . they had arrived . . . selected a spot and marked it. There in the distance we saw many white spots . . . coming closer they proved to be white tents . . . hundreds of them . . . in a strip of green, the oasis or wells.

Coming down low, we circled the spot . . . white cloth marked the "field" with a "T" to indicate landing direction, and a fire burned alongside the "T" to indicate wind direction also. Twice we circled the field, as the pilot studied the terrain . . . then in we came to a very smooth landing . . . a tribute to the pilot's skill and the good judgment of the men who had picked out the spot.

We were met by the King's Ministers . . . Yussuf Youssein, Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs; Suleiman, Minister of Finance, and others, and at once were taken to a guest tent, especially prepared for us . . . with luxurious oriental rugs spread on the sand inside, easy chairs, etc. Our party . . . outside of the crew of the plane . . . consisted of General Royce, General Giles, a Lieutenant interpreter, and myself. Soon we were advised that His Majesty would receive us . . . and were escorted to the King's audience tent.

The King greeted us in friendliest fashion . . . why should he not, when we brought Lend-Lease? . . . but more than that I believe that he genuinely likes and trusts Americans. We talked at length . . . General Royce told him of the "token shipment," of the other things to follow . . . the King expressed his gratitude.

Then the King pulled a surprise . . . sitting way out here in the middle of the Arabian desert, some ninety miles from a town of any kind . . . seemingly shut off from all the affairs of the world . . . he said he'd like to tell us of his views on the Jewish-Arabian con-

troversy (Palestine, etc.) . . . not that he was making a formal protest, as some governments had done, nor did he intend to make a formal protest, but simply that he wanted to tell us, his friends, for he felt sure we were his friends, how he felt about it. Then he proceeded to discuss what our American Congress had done not two weeks before, in Washington . . . in well informed style. And he did not like it . . . that he made clear.

It seemed such a strange contradiction . . . far out in these desert wastes . . . surrounded only by a medieval tent village, with Oriental Arabs in ancient costumes . . . a most intelligent discussion of today's up-to-the-minute affairs. Certainly these Arabs are not an unintelligent people.

Of course the General explained that he was a military man, not a diplomat . . . that such matters were for our State Department to handle and not for us . . . but that we would transmit his views to our Government.

The King urged us to stay with him . . . at least for the traditional three days of an Arabian visit . . . our quarters were all prepared. General Royce thanked him, but explained that the War called, he must be away to another assignment and so could not stop but for the hour or two. With the King's permission I took a number of pictures . . . we said our good-byes and left.

Before we boarded our plane, however, the King's people presented us with His Majesty's gifts . . . beautiful curved ceremonial swords, done in gold and silver scabbards, and Arab costumes for the Generals . . . I received a costume and an exquisite Arabian dagger in a gold and silver sheath with three jewels along the handle. Every member of the party, including the crew, received a costume and some received watches with the King's name thereon. And we were off . . . back to Abadan, over night there . . . up early the next morning, to Damascus, and back to our home base.

Since then I have read, in *Time*, the story of this trip. It baffled me. For I alone had given the story to the war correspondents, at the regular press conference the day after returning. They could not have gotten the story elsewhere. Yet *Time's* story was such a dis-

tortion as to be almost funny. *Time* told of the King's falcons, of his hunting "bustards," etc. I had told them solely that I assumed the King was out there in the desert for a bit of hunting, but I wasn't sure. *Time* said we didn't know where the King was, and we "wandered about for 1,100 miles before finding him." Nothing of the sort was true . . . nor were they so told. We knew where he was, never were off our course . . . wandered not a bit.

That brings to mind *Time's* story of February 14th, about the beheading of a Pilgrim at Mecca last December . . . they headed it "Blasphemous Retch" . . . told of this Pilgrim getting sick, vomiting on the holy carpet and being summarily beheaded. It so happens that we were in Jeddah the day that happened at Mecca, forty miles away . . . and the very next day members of King Ibn Saud's party told us the story . . . of this individual desecrating the carpet (and it wasn't a vomit), being taken away only to have him return and desecrate the carpet in an even more nauseating fashion . . . then he was beheaded.

At Abadan, on this trip we bought some of the best stuffed dates I have ever eaten . . . stuffed with almonds. For this is the center of what is perhaps the greatest date growing country in the world. . . huge date palm trees stretch for miles around. We bought a huge case of them to take to England with us . . . for fruits are scarce there, they tell us. I hope we won't appear silly, as some people have, who have brought dates to Abadan from America.

And oranges . . . in Palestine we found the finest oranges I have ever seen . . . as large as a good-sized coconut . . . juicy, sweet . . . and they cost us a penny a piece. California and Florida please copy. Egypt, too, has many oranges and tangerines . . . but they cannot compare with Palestine's products.

The next two days were hectic . . . getting ready to shove off . . . farewell dinners for General Royce . . . one of them a huge, formal affair at Minister Kirk's town house . . . all of the big-wigs of British and American military and diplomatic circles.

Then, early the next morning we were off . . . across the desert to Bengazi. Off again, and after more hours we landed at Bari, Italy.

We visited the harbor area . . . saw the remaining evidences of the Bari raid of some time ago. Also to the Cathedral of St. Nicholas, some 1,000 years or more old . . . rather broken down and decrepit, but still used for services . . . cold, wet, leaky roofs . . . but beautiful frescos on the ceiling of the main part of the church. This is the cathedral to the Saint from which we derive the St. Nicholas of Christmas fame. Outside the cathedral, as well as inside, were evidences of the filthy habits of these people.

Next day we flew to Foggia . . . watched ships coming and going . . . here we are really close to the War . . . huge bombers departing and returning with their deadly loads delivered to their objectives.

Italy, at least this "leg of the boot" part of Italy, is rugged country . . . a narrow fertile plain along the coast on either side and then the country rises rapidly up to rough mountains, snow-capped at this time of year. The land is wet . . . very wet . . . rains have hampered activities greatly.

Across the mountains in the afternoon to the headquarters of Lt. Gen. Ira Eaker, Commanding General of the Mediterranean Allied Air Forces . . . and here we stayed several days. One day we went up to the fighting front . . . to the much-fought-over Cassino area . . . in jeeps. Close to the town, so that we could see the whole Valley spread before us . . . the Rapido River winding in and out . . . the Benedictine Monastery on the mountain top across the valley. Heavy guns roared from our left rear . . . we watched the shells land on the mountain opposite. A battery "let loose" to our right . . . it made me jump, for we had not known it was there. Troops in little dugouts, with pup tents across the top . . . what a place for a man to live in such rain, mud, penetrating cold, even if he wasn't getting shot at. I hand it to the infantry . . . those boys certainly "take it" as well as "dish it out."

We visited Naples . . . the harbor shows eloquently what our bombers did to the Nazi shipping and to the docks. But today it is a busy port . . . we are putting in the stuff our troops need, in great quantity. American ingenuity at one spot utilized a sunken ship . . .

by building a platform upon the ship's upturned side and using it as a dock.

How well we have the air situation in hand was evidenced by the fact that with all this activity, the Nazis rarely dared come over to occasion as much as an air raid warning. Why don't we make faster progress then? That's not for me to answer. But I came away convinced it wasn't for any ineffectiveness of air power.

General Eaker took us for a little side trip to Pompeii, and part way up Vesuvius . . . we didn't have time to go to the top as we had planned. Maybe that was just as well . . . not more than a week later Vesuvius "let loose" and poured great streams of lava down the side, burying many houses. I'm glad it didn't decide to do its stuff with us up on its slopes.

One evening General Eaker had many of the big-wigs of this area in for dinner . . . Lt. Gen. Mark Clark, Lieutenant General Devers, General Bouscat, Chief of French Air Force, Air Marshal Slesser, Deputy Commander in Chief of M.A.A.F., and many others. It was a real thrill to meet so many of these top-flight men and have a chance to see them in their "native habitat," and talk with them, even if only briefly.

The headquarters here was of the mobile type . . . I slept in a trailer . . . the weather was, for the most part, bad . . . rain three days out of five, and I mean real, heavy rain. Cold, raw, clammy.

Finally we had to push along. Taking off, we flew low past Naples, Vesuvius . . . across the harbor of Naples north of Sorrento . . . out to the Isle of Capri, a rocky small island, sheer sides rising up several hundred feet in places.

After a few hours, we passed over the tip of Sicily . . . on, and after several more hours past Bizerte and into Algiers to spend the night. Off the next day, and on to Casablanca.

Here I parted company with General Royce . . . for I had a special mission to the States . . . the General was on his way to his new post in England.

I took off in a huge transport plane in mid-morning. I can't tell you our exact route but I can say we crossed the North Atlantic. And



the next morning . . . right on schedule . . . we sat down at National Airport, Washington, D. C.

That's the story to date. I'll be here in the States three or four weeks . . . during which time I'm chiseling a leave, and I'm spending most of that up here in the country "doin' nuthin'."

But it will be interesting to get back across the water to the new assignment. It will be vastly different from the Middle East, I'm sure. And it should be intensely interesting to get a close-up of what goes on among the boys that are bombing hell out of Germany.

Another time, maybe, I can tell you something of that.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Put". The letters are fluid and connected, with a large initial "P" and a trailing flourish.



7

ENGLAND

7 May 1944

Dear Folks:

This is England. And, "O, to be in England now that April's there." This time, at least, the country justifies that "Chamber of Commerce" enthusiasm. I landed here the last week in April, and for the past two weeks England has been beautiful. Spring is here. Clear, sunshiny days . . . cool, but pleasant.

As you fly over England, Northern Ireland, or Scotland a multi-colored crazy-quilt pattern spreads out below . . . fields, woods, streams, lakes . . . vivid greens, browns, yellows, tans. Small fields of irregular shapes fenced in by hedges, stone walls, and winding roads . . . rolling hills and green valleys . . . blossoms and flowers in profusion, of many kinds and colors. Reminds me of New England . . . or Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, in the spring . . . except, of course, that here the fields are more like small gardens.

I don't know how long this weather will last, but it is grand while we have it. I've heard dire tales of England's weather. One

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chap in New York told me, "Don't oversleep any morning over there or summer may have come and gone without your seeing it."

I was delayed longer in the States than I had anticipated . . . actually spent a bit more than five weeks there . . . and of course it was good to get home. I enjoyed it immensely, but I was glad to get back on the job here in a new Theater of Operations.

We came over in a huge transport . . . plush, reclining seats, with little pillows . . . we were most comfortable, and I slept most of the night of our crossing. The trip was uneventful . . . we were right on schedule and in fairly fast time.

INTERRUPTION: As I write, the radio is booming out a German propaganda program of German vocal music. I can't help but stop and admire the splendid voices and music. You've got to hand it to these Heinies . . . they do many things well . . . damn 'em. We can learn that much from them at least. They don't kid themselves that they can do anything well without effort . . . or that they can have more by doing less.

Speaking of our trip over, I don't believe I told you much of our westward crossing, some seven weeks ago. On that trip I rode in a "bucket seat." What's a bucket seat? Well, it is an aluminum bench running along either side of the ship's cabin, with a slight depression every eighteen inches, for you to sit in. No backs to lean against . . . only the rough, unfinished side of the ship . . . no arms . . . just a bench. It isn't bad for a few hours. It helps if you can lie on the floor with a blanket part of the time. But on that trip we had a good many sick and wounded with us and they had first priority on the litters which occupied the center of the cabin floor. So, after a day and a night just sitting in a bucket seat, you'll understand my enthusiasm for the cushions. I'm a softy.

Here we are very comfortably set up . . . I'm living with General Royce again . . . in an English country house . . . broad lawns, tall pines, flowers (the iris are in full bloom and just outside the door there's a "blue tree," six or eight feet high, with small snowball-like flowers of blue . . . I know not what it is); beyond are green pastures

where cattle graze. The house is modern . . . large living rooms, large bedrooms, baths, fireplaces. Again . . . I'm a softy, and I like it.

Our headquarters is in an old English estate house . . . a huge old place with large stables and garages, which have also been turned into offices. Broad, rolling, lawn-like fields spread away from the front of the main house, and a very pretty little lake lies immediately in the rear. Trees are heavy with blossoms . . . some seem weighted down with their flowers.

No doubt you wonder what England is like in war time. Of course, that's too big a question for me to try to answer . . . especially on such short acquaintance. But one does get impressions.

The other evening we came home early from a dinner. I was reading in bed, the time had run along almost to midnight, when I became conscious of the distant roar of many heavy engines. It grew louder . . . then faded, as they passed over. Apparently a group of "heavies" (probably R.A.F., as they bomb at night mostly) on its way to the continent. A half-hour later the heavy "thunder" of engines passed over again.

I went to sleep . . . but I was restless . . . apparently the nearness to ships and men going to war was in my mind . . . I slept lightly. Thirty minutes later I waked again . . . another group was going over . . . it was 1:20 a.m. Then, in swift succession groups came over at 1:25, at 1:30, at 1:40. I was intrigued so I jotted down the time each passed. I slept again . . . until 4:20 when another group roared by . . . followed by others at 4:25, 4:35, 4:55, and at 5:20. Again I slept . . . until 7:00 when I rose to be greeted by a group of our American "heavies" headed for the continent. The "dayshift" had taken over . . . throughout the day the heavy traffic continued.

Naturally we see or hear only those ships that pass over our vicinity . . . we can't possibly see but a small part of all the ships that go and come. So, multiply the above by whatever figure you think reasonable and I think you'll conclude, as I did, "The Heinies must be getting a whale of a pasting." I'm glad I am not over there on the receiving end, regardless of what some of the wise-cracking skeptics say about the alleged ineffectiveness of air power.

In the short time I've been here, I've been out a good deal . . . visiting air force units at many fields with General Royce. We've seen the big four-engined bombers, the "mediums," the "fighter-bombers," and the fighters. We've watched squadrons of bombers . . . and of fighters . . . take off on their missions. We've watched them land on their return. We've listened while "combat intelligence" quizzes these young pilots, as soon as they step from their ships, as to what they did, what they saw, what the results of their missions were. It is fascinating. To me, the most interesting part of all is to study the faces of these boys who fly these ships, navigate them, keep radio contact, and fire their guns. They are the same boys we all know . . . the kid next door, the "side kick" of your boy in high school or in college . . . that youngster that was coming to see your daughter or sister a few months ago . . . or, your own boy. Have they changed much? No, not really . . . except they are more grown up . . . they are doing a big job, and they know it . . . they are proud and serious about it, yet they are still just boys.

Naturally I've seen but a small part of the American units over here. But what I have seen is enough to make any American stick out his chest . . . with no doubt in his mind as to the ultimate outcome of this War.

A few days ago we took King Peter, of Yugoslavia, along on an inspection trip the General was making. You'll remember that we had seen a great deal of Peter in Egypt. At one field the leading Mustang (P-51 fighter) Ace of the European Theater was presented to His Majesty and to Generals Brereton and Royce. He is Captain Don Beerbower, from Minnesota I believe. He is credited with thirteen and one-half enemy planes shot down (one-half credit is given when two pilots share in shooting down an enemy). He is medium in height, fair-haired, perhaps twenty-five. General Royce asked him, "What was your latest victory and at what altitude did you get him?" He answered, "A Messerschmidt 109, at 34,000 feet, sir." The General continued with, "Was he able to perform with you at that altitude?" The Captain said, "No, sir, not at that or at any other altitude." I

was impressed by his simple expression of the tremendous pride and confidence these pilots have in their planes.

Of course, it isn't all War. One day we took a trip across country in a car . . . past the famous Ascot race track, through Windsor Park and by Windsor Palace . . . the Palace a tremendous pile of stone that rambles over acres inside the high stone walls, truly reminiscent of medieval days. It is impressive. How strong are traditions and habits that these English people, even in these strenuous times, keep on paying hundreds of thousands of pounds every year to support their Royal Family in this and other castles . . . to maintain what is really nothing more than a symbol of the might and wealth of the British Empire.

Just across the river from Windsor, lies the old-time village of Eton with its famous school . . . red buildings that are rather unimpressive. At one side are those famous "playing fields of Eton" where, they say, "England's battles have been won." Near the buildings is a row of stall-like structures of masonry, quite like outdoor handball courts, where the boys play the English game of "Fives." Don't ask me what it is . . . I know even less about that than I do about cricket.

We didn't see any of the students . . . those boys in great white collars, long pants, jackets, and tall hats . . . it was vacation time.

On up the road a few miles lies the town of Stoke Pogis. Just before we got there we passed the country churchyard where Gray's "Elegy" was written. We stopped and walked back. There is a simple, pretty little stone church . . . unpretentious markers identify the graves . . . they look old but the dates on many of them show they are relatively new. Apparently the graveyard is still used for burials or has been used at least until recently. In the pasture across the fence cattle graze, as they must have when Gray wrote "The lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea."

Another day we spent in London. We took a rather hurried drive through the "Old City" where bombing was heaviest. Yes, London took a beating . . . but, thank God for the past tense. The House of Parliament, Big Ben, The Thames, London Tower and London Bridge, St. Paul's, Westminster Abbey, and Buckingham Palace . . .



the last a dreary pile. We wound up the day with a squash game at the Royal Automobile Club . . . an excellent championship court, and I enjoyed it a lot.

That evening, after squash, we stopped in to see Prince Bernhard (Prince Consort of Juliana of The Netherlands). He's German, as I remember it, but long ago he cut his connections with Heinies. He is a very charming person . . . thirty-three, nice looking, speaks flawless English . . . a friendly, generous host. He's quite a flyer, so naturally the conversation was mostly about airplanes. He is to go along on an inspection trip to some of our American flying fields next week.

I spoke of King Peter. Doubtless you saw pictures of his wedding about a month or six weeks ago. His bride is Alexandra, daughter of Anastasia, Princess of Greece. She's fairly tall, a touch taller than Peter . . . dark, attractive, and good looking. They have a small cottage not too far from us. One evening we were invited over for cocktails and to meet the new bride. Then, as I mentioned above, we took Peter along on the inspection trip a few days later. Returning that eve we stopped in again at their cottage. They had just learned to shoot craps . . . not from us, but from some American I suppose . . . and wanted to try their luck on us. So we agreed to a small "freeze-out" game for ten shillings each. All six of us were down on our hands and knees on the floor . . . banging the dice against the wall . . . The King and Queen, General Royce, Colonel Skrivanic, Peter's Aide, a guest of the Queen's, and myself. They cleaned us out . . . but it was a lot of fun to see them get such a kick out of the silly game.

That reminds me . . . in one of my former letters I told you about the "mustard on bananas" story . . . how we kidded about that dish at lunch one day back in Egypt, until King Peter insisted on seeing someone eat "mustard on bananas," and I was caught and had to try the dish. You'll remember I told you it really was pretty good . . . that both General Royce and I ate it and liked it . . . and I suggested that you try it.

Well, one night while I was in New York recently, a group of our friends gathered up at our suite at the Hotel Barclay. Much conversation and horseplay was going on when Earl Hudson, of Detroit, asked if he might use the phone. He went into the other room to talk, so none of us knew what was going on. Soon there was a ring at the door. Earl hurried to answer it . . . and in walked a waiter with a silver tray and on it a banana and a jar of mustard. The waiter immediately put the tray before me, without a word.

Practically everyone in the room knew the Egyptian "mustard and bananas" story . . . so the implication was plain to all. Earl was calling my "tall story."

Without a word I peeled the banana, spread mustard on generously, ate heartily. I spread another segment and ate that . . . with gusto. By that time my wife's curiosity got the better of her and she begged, "Let me try it." She did . . . and liked it. Soon everyone had to try it . . . we had to send out for more bananas . . . and all agreed that here was a toothsome dish.

To top it off, a few evenings later we went to Jim and Marian Peck's house for cocktails . . . and the prime "hors d'oeuvre" was bananas and mustard. Now, if you don't believe all that—well, try it yourself.

Since I've been here, I've seen quite a number of people I've known elsewhere . . . General Nugent, whom we knew at Mitchel Field; Lt. Col. Rod Tower, with whom I lived at Miami Beach, and others. But it is quite difficult to contact people over here unless they happen to be near where we are . . . for there are so many camps . . . it isn't easy to find out exactly where people are . . . and we can't just drop things and run over 75 or 150 miles to see someone. So, if I fail to look up some of the people some of you have suggested I look up . . . or if I don't get it done immediately . . . I hope you'll understand. I've still got things in my bags which I brought over for boys over here and I haven't the least idea where they are, when I'll see them, or how. But I shall do it when I can.

Incidentally . . . food is excellent and plentiful . . . for us, at least. Plenty of beef, pork, fresh vegetables . . . and I haven't even seen

any "Spam," or the much maligned "brussels sprouts." I don't know how well the English eat, but certainly we Americans feed well.

I almost forgot to tell you what my new work is . . . I'm Assistant to the Chief of Staff of the NINTH AIR FORCE . . . a fascinating, "ringside seat" for this front.

Of course that does mean that most of what I see and do is "out" so far as telling anything about it. I hope that won't mean that I won't find anything interesting to write about. Anyhow, I'll try to write when I think I've found something to talk about that won't bore you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Put".



# 8

ENGLAND  
1 June 1944

Dear Folks:

When I last wrote, I hesitated to send the letter. It seemed to me it was about nothing but trivialities. And, after having been in the colorful Middle East so many months, I felt that you would hardly be interested in the rather commonplace happenings here.

But some of you have been kind enough to say that the last letter was not boring . . . so, with that reassurance, I'll take a chance. For of course we are still very much limited by censorship as to what we can say . . . and, being in headquarters, it seems that practically everything is "*Top Secret*."

I suspect that all of you are more or less "sitting on the edge of your chairs," waiting for the invasion . . . for "D-DAY." At least I gather that impression from letters and dispatches from the States which appear in our newspapers. Naturally we have a good deal of interest in the same subject. Preparations go on constantly . . . feverishly.

We have been out to a good many air fields during past weeks. One day we took Prince Bernhard (Netherlands) along on an inspection trip. We saw hundreds of Lightnings (P-38's), Thunderbolts (P-47's),

Mustangs (P-51's) . . . all "fighter-bombers." We watched many scores of them take off on missions over France, Belgium, or Germany . . . watched them return . . . listened while the pilots were being "briefed" (i.e. given their detailed instructions as to where they were going, exact location of target, information as to where "flak" batteries of the enemy are located, weather to be expected, etc.). We listened while returning pilots told "combat intelligence" officers what they had done, what they had seen.

At one field we watched while scores of Thunderbolts took off for a bombing mission . . . each ship with two (2) 1,000-pound bombs slung under the wings and an extra tank of gas under the belly of the ship. This is a remarkable feat, for these ships were originally intended, and designed, to be simply "fighters" . . . were not expected to do any kind of bombing. But through experimentation, trial and error, our boys have learned to use them as "fighter-bombers" . . . carry these tremendous bomb loads . . . and they are doing an astounding job of bombing out bridges, gun positions, vital enemy war factories. Originally these fighters (and that includes the Lightnings and the Mustangs as well) were used only to protect formations of heavy or medium bombers . . . or to go on "sweeps" hoping to destroy enemy aircraft. They still do that of course. But in addition to that, they have proven a most important factor in the "softening up" bombing of the enemy. (That's no military secret . . . you may have read it in the papers . . . but seeing it actually done gives one a different sense of the magnitude of the accomplishment.)

With Prince Bernhard were two Dutch officers . . . his Aides . . . Baron Van Tuyll and Major P. J. C. Voss, both fine-looking young fellows . . . all speak good English . . . are most likable companions. (We saw them several times later, at one of the Prince's cocktail parties, etc.)

Major Voss' story was particularly interesting. (He wasn't bragging . . . in fact he did not mention it . . . another party told me.) Before the War he had been a pilot for K.L.M. (Dutch International Airways). When Hitler invaded Holland, Voss was taken prisoner and made to work in the Fokker aircraft factory. After a year or so, when the

Heinies felt they could trust Voss somewhat, they put him to testing planes . . . making sure, however, to give him a very small amount of gas when he went aloft so he could not hope to escape by flying to another country.

This went on for some time. Voss, with another Dutch pilot who was a prisoner like himself, managed to steal a bit of gas from week to week . . . to hide it away. Having lulled the "Squareheads" into a sense of trusting, one day they managed, without being observed, to put their extra gas into a ship that was to be tested. They took off together and headed for England. They were shot at, of course, before they reached the sea. But their real troubles began when they crossed over England, flying a German ship with the black cross and swastika plainly in sight on wings and tail. They ran into heavy anti-aircraft fire . . . the ship was damaged . . . R.A.F. fighter pilots chased them, drove them to the ground . . . but they managed to land before being shot down. Both escaped unhurt.

Such incidents have become more or less commonplace in this War. But I get a "lift" whenever I meet one of these men who has been through such an experience . . . one who "has had it," as the British say.

Another day we visited air fields with Lord Trenchard of the R.A.F. He's a "Marshal of the Royal Air Force" . . . the highest rank there is (it would correspond to a five-star General, if we had one) . . . only King George holds equal rank, as I understand it, and of course the King's rank is purely honorary. Lord Trenchard got his the hard way.

He is a charming man of seventy or slightly more . . . they call him the "Father of the R.A.F." . . . he's been flying since 1912, and has, perhaps, done more than anyone else to develop the R.A.F. from its swaddling clothes days.

Again we visited fighter-bomber fields . . . also medium-bomber fields. And we visited several fields of the Troop Carriers . . . these are the boys that carry the "airborne troops" . . . the paratroopers and the airborne infantry that land in gliders. They use transports similar to those used on our airlines at home . . . each tows a huge



glider. This was the first time I had watched them take off, each power ship with its glider in tow, circles overhead until finally they all form into huge groups of ship-glider units.

Lord Trenchard is a Grand Old Man . . . full of stories and a great sense of humor. At lunch he regaled us with some of his experiences. Referring to one of the fields we had visited that morning, he said, "I went there in 1912 . . . as a student flyer. I was a Second Lieutenant . . . on my second day I was made second in command. So it was up to me to set an example . . . in fact I had to teach myself to fly, prepare my own exam, take the exam, pass myself. And I've kept up that high standard ever since."

He told another story on himself. Said he was driving in London at the time of the heavy blitzes and was stopped. He got out and walked over to the Strand . . . it was deserted . . . he walked along the Strand, noticing that there were groups of people up and down the street some 250 feet away. He walked to one end of the deserted portion and asked a bobby why the empty street and the curious groups. The bobby replied, "Sir, you have just walked past a time bomb." "Why didn't someone stop me?" Lord Trenchard inquired. The reply, "Sir, I think they all recognized you."

Another day I went with General Royce to visit Lieut. Gen. "Jimmy" Doolittle and his staff at their headquarters . . . so we saw a bit of what the 8th Air Force is doing, as Doolittle is Commanding General of the 8th. Also saw Brig. Gen. "Pat" Partridge, whom I've known for years . . . he is Chief of Staff for Doolittle.

Of course you have been reading and hearing about the increasing intensity of the "air invasion." Actually we see little of it except the going and the coming . . . or that is almost all we see, for the Heinies never venture over England any more in the daylight . . . and relatively rarely at night.

The nearest thing to a "shooting war" I've seen here was a few nights ago. I wakened in the middle of the night . . . it was 1:30 a.m. . . . noticed that the doors and the windows were rattling . . . then heard the distant boom and rumble of guns . . . anti-aircraft guns, I assume . . . they were too far away to be sure and, as it was brilliant moon-

light and tall trees obscured my view of the horizon, I could not see the flashes. There was a constant chatter of what must have been light guns, punctuated frequently with heavier booms of larger caliber stuff. A few minutes later I heard the sound of airplane engines. Craning my neck out of my bedroom window, as the sound came nearer, I managed to make out some of the ships winging along at relatively low altitudes, through the broken clouds. But no searchlights came on in this vicinity . . . no anti-aircraft guns nearby went into action . . . apparently they were our own planes . . . perhaps night-fighters returning from a scrap with the intruders in the distance. After thirty minutes all was quiet again . . .

. . . did I say quiet? Perhaps that is hardly the right word. Night after night, almost without exception, we hear great groups of ships pass over at all hours . . . on their way to, or coming from, the Continent. The days are duplicates of the nights. But we notice this sort of activity with more or less "business interest" . . . it is all part of the day's routine.

So the days go by. While the atmosphere of war is all about us, we live a very pleasant life under very comfortable surroundings.

June has come and brought some warm days . . . "too hot," the English say . . . apparently they aren't used to them. Several days the thermometer ran up into the high 80's . . . and with the high humidity that always prevails here, it was hot. We are in heavy uniforms and that didn't help a bit either . . . but I am advised that summer uniforms are never authorized here because the warm days are so few and so many are genuinely chilly.

We know the days can be chilly . . . it was only a matter of a week or two since we were having heavy, "killing," frosts . . . ruined the fruit crop, they say, or a great part of it. I know, too, that these mornings were chilly for we have been using a jeep for transportation to HQ . . . that's the General's pet idea, and he loves to race along at the wheel of this "air conditioned" go-devil. Some of those cool mornings, as I rode the several miles to HQ . . . in the back seat without topcoat . . . I practically froze. That precipitated a name for the General's jeep . . . "Mr. Birdseye" . . . the jeep also "quick-freezes."

Speaking of being cold . . . I am amused by our English thermometer . . . it is marked in Fahrenheit and at 70 degrees it has the warning "TOO WARM." That probably explains why the English are so fond of the heavy woolen clothes which are unbearably hot for us. I suspect that if we adopted English customs of heating in the States there would be much yelping . . . especially from the alleged weaker sex. It might make them wear some clothes.

Here's another English idea . . . and I think it's a pretty good one: in the bathroom they have a towel rack made of nicked water pipes which carry hot water to bath and wash basin. So . . . you draw hot water . . . pipes get hot . . . you use towel, hang on hot pipes . . . it dries quickly. Works equally well summer and winter. Darned clever, these Occidental English. That's an idea I'm going to adopt.

But here's one that "slays" me. If you draw enough water in the tub so that water runs out the overflow, it does not go down the regular drain . . . instead it runs out a special spout that sticks out from the side of the house, the water splashing down announces to everyone in the neighborhood that you are *wasting water*. They say the law requires that device . . . to save water supply. Maybe it is a good idea at that. I suspect we would hate to have to adopt it in the States.

And you should try to play English croquet . . . No, actually I haven't played it, but we have a croquet set on our lawn, and it is a strange set-up, to a simple American mind. In the first place there is only *one stake* . . . that is in the *middle*, where the middle arch should be (arches become wickets over here). There are only six wickets instead of the 8 we use . . . one wicket at each end where we have two . . . no posts or stakes at either end . . . and the post in the middle takes the place of our middle arch. Figure it out and see if my math is correct. But never mind, I don't know how to play the "bally game" anyhow.

Which reminds me . . . we moved since I last wrote. The other place was grand, except for some problems with our landlords. Our new place is much like the other except that we are less countrified. This place is one of those built when they broke up a large estate recently . . . so we are in the middle of an old estate . . . in a little

community of five or six houses . . . a fine old golf course still runs around our little settlement.

The house is more modern than the other . . . there's a fine grass tennis court and we play fairly frequently . . . lots of flowers and a vegetable garden (tended by the owner). We have another of those "blue trees" I mentioned before . . . the ones with snowball-like flowers of blue. Strange thing is that most English gardens seem to have them but, though I've asked many people, few English people know what they are. Finally I found one flower enthusiast who did know . . . or claimed to . . . and SOOPRIZE . . . he says it is a California plant called *Ceanothus*.

Perhaps the most outstanding feature of the English countryside at this time of year is the profusion of flowers. At our HQ, the main building is almost covered with climbing roses and ivy. Across the little lake, back of the HQ, great clumps of flowering bushes reflect their variegated colors in the water . . . deep purples, vivid reds, pinks, blues . . . some of the clumps run seventy-five to a hundred feet along the water's edge, solid with flowers from the water to a height of ten to twelve feet. A lone, huge, white swan sails majestically up and down the lake . . . attacking any itinerant ducks or other fowl that dare to invade his private domain.

As you drive along the roads . . . no, they aren't roads as we understand the word, rather winding lanes for the most part . . . flowering shrubs line the path . . . many colors. Either these are wild flowers or it has taken generations of encouragement to develop them. You see them everywhere . . . miles and miles and miles of them. The houses along these narrow roads are almost completely shut off from view by the hedges, trees, and shrubbery . . . every bend in the road is a serious traffic hazard.

But the real menace to life and limb on these roads is the multitude of bicycles . . . youngsters, oldsters, old ladies, soldiers with their gals . . . all England is "a-cycle," or so it seems. You see Mamma and Papa riding along, with Junior, aged maybe eighteen months, in a trailer behind his Dad's bicycle. On Sundays whole squadrons

of cyclists . . . apparently the Village Cycle and Sporting Clubs of young males and females . . . out for their weekend fun.

Undoubtedly England always has had more bicycles than we have in the States . . . they have never had the automobiles. And the bicyclists of England are not to be tampered with. An R.A.F. Group Captain tells me that never in England's history has any politician had the nerve to try to put a tax on bicycles . . . that it wasn't until the current war made it necessary that they dared to require cyclists to carry a light while riding at night.

In short, here's a new kind of political bloc . . . the bicyclists' bloc . . . that puts fear into the heart of the toughest politico.

It is almost impossible to exaggerate the beauty of this English countryside at this time of year. One Sunday we flew down into Kent . . . to visit friends of the General, whom he knew when he was here several years ago. The country is fairly hilly . . . some of the hills rise up 500 to 600 feet above the surrounding country. The fields are like green gardens, fenced in with trees and hedges . . . frequent patches of forest dot the landscape.

The place we visited was one of the old-time castles . . . the "boss" has a "Sir" in front of his name. The castle sits on top of a hill, surrounded by green fields and trees . . . a huge place . . . built in the 16th century. In addition to the family, there is a company of some 150 British soldiers quartered in the castle. But there is no crowding. We were entertained in a room some one hundred feet long by thirty feet wide . . . ceilings moderately high, perhaps seventeen feet. Three great fireplaces are spaced along the inner wall . . . the outer wall and the ends are lighted by many large windows. In spite of its "ball-room" size it is a truly charming room . . . with an almost homey atmosphere.

We've been over to King Peter's several times recently and had him to the house for dinner one evening. One day we went to his place for tea . . . as we entered they were playing "Mairzy Doats" on the gramophone (phonograph to you Colonials). Perhaps that was for our special benefit, for we had given them that record . . . it was one of several Jim and Marian Peck had given me to bring

back. But both Peter and Alexandra seem to get a big kick out of it.

Note for the ladies: I noted Alexandra's diamond ring . . . that's unusual for me, as I have a void where jewel appreciation should be. The "rock" is about the size of my thumb nail (and I do not have tiny artist's hands) and seemed to me to be unusually deep. How many carats? I'm afraid to guess.

Speaking of Peter . . . have you noticed the great build-up Tito, of Yugoslavia, has been getting this past year or more in U. S. magazines and newspapers. The same thing is happening over here . . . and was true also in the Middle East. But do you remember that only a bit over a year ago Mihailovic was the hero of Yugoslavia . . . then *he* was getting the big play. Remember the great stories of Ruth Mitchell (Gen. Billy Mitchell's sister) . . . how she joined the Yugoslav "Chetniks" . . . how she was made much of for her work with Mihailovic? Peter originally supported Mihailovic . . . in fact, he clung to Mihailovic long after this present build-up started on Tito. Now I note that Peter is finally turning to support of Tito . . . reluctantly, as far as I can make out, under severe political pressure. (We don't discuss politics with Peter . . . all the above is simply from other observations.) Why this change? Why do I comment on it? Well, there is frequently much more in these political maneuverings than meets the eye. You make your own guess.

Not long ago we spent a day in London. Out of curiosity we stopped in at a delicatessen . . . perhaps I should say a combination of fruit store, green grocers, flower shop, and delicatessen. We priced some of their stuff. Here are a few samples:

*Peaches*, fresh . . . smaller than a tennis ball . . .

Price . . . 15 shillings 4 pence . . . (approx. \$3.00 U. S.)

NOTE: That's *per peach* . . . not per dozen or peck

*Melons* . . . like honey dews . . . medium size . . .

Price . . . 3 pounds 4 shillings . . . (approx. \$12.00 *per each*)

*Squab* . . . small, size of small fist . . . a lady's fist . . .

cooked, with gravy-like sauce over it . . .

Price . . . 15 shillings 6 pence (approx. \$3.00 *per each*)



It made me wonder what has happened to ceiling prices . . . or maybe they never went in for that stuff. 'Course these are not essential foods.

Reminds me of some prices we ran into in China last November . . . and they say prices are worse in China today than they were then:

In Kunming four of us had tea and cakes in a restaurant . . . the bill was \$175.00 . . . we gave the waiter \$25.00 as a tip. That's Chinese money . . . approximately \$2.20 U. S. money.

In the window of this same Kunming restaurant they had a bottle of Johnny Walker Black Label Scotch whisky on display . . . any kind of liquor is practically non-existent in China, so I asked the price. \$7,500, they said. That's Chinese money of course. But even at the then prevailing rates of exchange, that meant between \$75.00 and \$100.00 hard American dollars. (I say between \$75 and \$100 . . . rate of exchange varies greatly from day to day and depends in large part on how well you can "wangle" with the money changer.)

A bus ride in Chungking . . . on crowded, falling-apart buses that are run on gas made from charcoal burners carried on trailers behind the buses . . . every ride is a fight for a place to stand . . . fare, \$15.00 (approx. 15 cents U. S.).

It sounds silly, doesn't it? Well, if you want something silly, try this for size . . . I culled it from a "goofey" column in *Stars & Stripes*, our GI paper . . . and it deals with the eternal struggle between the sergeant and his enlisted men:

"I wish I wuz a wittle egg, away up in a twee.

I wish I wuz a wittle egg, as wotten as can be.

An' when th' mean ol' Sergeant began to shout at me,

I'd frow my wotten wittle self, wight down and spwatter he."

At least the boys keep their sense of the ridiculous . . . that makes for good morale.

I have a new assignment . . . I'm still at headquarters, but shifted over to some other work. I have charge of the handling of all flying combat crew personnel when they are no longer able to continue

with combat missions . . . whether because of "operational fatigue," injuries, or any other medical or psychological reasons. I work with a Special Board of medical men . . . M. D.'s and psychologists . . . handle disposition of all cases after the board makes its recommendations. Obviously this bears directly on the combat efficiency of all combat crews . . . it is very absorbing. And it is a real satisfaction to feel you are doing something that contributes directly to polishing off this War.

Later . . . 8 June 1944

#### THE INVASION IS ON.

Before I got this letter ready to go the BIG DAY broke.

We had known fairly accurately when it would happen. When I arrived here some six weeks ago I was put on the secret list and given the general story . . . in order that I might be able to handle secret papers and messages. So these last few weeks have been more than a normal "sweating out" period for us . . . we couldn't talk . . . in fact, for safety, it was wise for us to stay away from most public places.

The big day approached . . . and, as you have read, almost at the last minute, "D-DAY" was postponed for twenty-four hours because of weather.

Late in the evening of the 5th . . . we stayed at home for security reasons . . . unusually large groups of planes began going over . . . transports towing gliders were seen hour after hour . . . all night long they continued. Early next morning we saw huge groups of "heavies," mediums, and fighter-bombers going out . . . in numbers as never before . . . and the air invasion had been heavy and constant for weeks. We KNEW the landings must have been made . . . but we still had no definite word.

Arriving at HQ at 8:00 a. m., everyone was keyed up . . . the air was charged with expectancy . . . though most of the people did not know anything except what they had seen in the sky.

At 9:30 the first official flash was released . . . it was a relief to everyone . . . "this was IT."

All day long the planes thundered overhead . . . larger, stronger formations than ever seen before . . . and of course we saw only a fraction of those that were taking part in the show.

As I finish this letter it is the 8th . . . the third day of the Invasion. All seems to be going in better style than was anticipated. We wait for every bit of news.

It is surprising that the Heinies didn't put up a stronger opposition to our crossing and to our landings. But a still greater puzzle is, "Where is the power of the Luftwaffe?"

The real test is yet to come, of course. We are waiting . . . and praying . . . hoping that the German strength may prove to be no greater than these first few days have shown it to be.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Put".



# 9

## NORMANDY

19 June 1944

Dear Folks:

This is France . . . the Normandy Beachhead . . . it is D-Day plus 13.

We flew over this morning in a transport . . . two fighter planes flew escort to us as we had four Generals aboard. It was a short trip, for we had a strong northerly wind pushing us along.

We flew fairly low . . . two thousand feet maximum . . . and though the visibility was not good, we saw a good deal of the Channel below, of the frequent convoys headed toward the French shore, of the barrage balloons which many vessels carried above them . . . like a small child with a toy balloon . . . of warships scurrying here and there on their missions.

As we neared the middle of the Channel the weather thickened . . . clouds lowered until we cut into them. Soon these gave way to broken sky. Approaching the French coast, coming down to low altitude beneath the clouds, the great invasion fleet came into view.

As far as we could see there were ships, ships, and still more ships . . . of every size, shape, type, and description . . . small swift motor craft, transports, landing craft, cruisers, huge battle wagons.

In spite of all we had read and known about the number of ships taking part in this operation it was hard to believe our own eyes. Allowing for all the progress of all the recent centuries, the magnitude of this fleet makes even the stories of the Spanish Armada shrink into a small-time operation.

Close in was the "breakwater" . . . made of our own "Liberty" ships, sunk by ourselves to provide this man-made harbor . . . an impressive feat in itself and a tribute to someone's imagination. Inside the "breakwater," scores and hundreds of ships moved back and forth . . . discharging their loads and departing.

The coast rises sharply from the water's edge. There is little beach space. The shore line is one almost unbroken "palisade" of 100 to 200 or more feet high. At the water's edge and on the narrow beach lie scores upon scores of landing craft, left when their passengers scrambled ashore.

Looking at this shore, it is hard to understand why our newspapers told the story, the first few days, that the initial landing had been relatively easy. There is no way up these almost sheer walls except occasional roads up narrow ravines that cut back into the country. And these roads are so narrow . . . I mean narrow between hills, not merely narrow as to road surface . . . that on D-Day before tanks could make their way up these roads, bulldozers had to go first and cut away the hills, widen the passage, that the tanks might get by. And don't think for a moment that the Heinies weren't well entrenched in these hills . . . but I'll tell you more of that later.

The weather had become worse . . . it rained, and low-hanging clouds covered the newly made landing strips not far from the shore . . . the gusty, tricky wind blasted in from the north.

We circled the landing strip several times, dodging barrage balloons . . . then came in low for a cross-wind landing. We sat down. The gusts of wind caught the ship and the newly turned earth of the landing strip was slimy with the rain . . . across the runway we slithered, and far down we skimmed close to the runway's edge, caught the wing of a damaged P-47 parked there, spun ourselves around and off the runway onto rough ground . . . crushing a wheel,

losing the propeller, which bit into the P-47, scraping our wing and engine into the ground.

I was nearest the door, and quickly we exited . . . lest the plane catch fire. But nothing happened . . . no one was hurt. The only casualty was the ship which must go to the repair depot.

Not a very auspicious return to France for me . . . this being the first time I had been in France since the last World War, just a bit more than twenty-five years ago. But in spite of that . . . in spite of the nasty, raw, chilling rain . . . it was a thrill to set foot on French soil, particularly here on this Normandy Beachhead.

We piled into jeeps and inspected the landing strip . . . for of course I came over with General Royce . . . then drove over to another landing strip and inspected that. Here again is the handiwork of the bulldozers. Two weeks ago there were no landing fields in this section of France. Within three or four days of the first landing, these air strips were in use. They say that the infantry was too busy doing other things those first few days, and when the engineers wanted to clear the Heinies out of these level spots so they could go to work with their bulldozers, they (the engineers) took their carbines and cleaned out the places themselves . . . then brought on the huge machines and, with carbines slung over their shoulders, went to work building air fields. This is surely a war of machines . . . and when those machines are numbered, the bulldozers and similar heavy equipment must get a high place along with planes, radar, and other more spectacular recent developments.

It was noon. We went into the nearby village . . . a fairly good-sized fishing village . . . to NINTH AIR FORCE ADVANCE HQ and to the quarters of the Generals. The Generals' house is thoroughly modern . . . well furnished . . . a most attractive living room with seventeen to nineteen foot ceiling and transparent glass blocks forming great lights toward the sea, from floor to ceiling.

Attractive pictures on the walls . . . tapestries . . . a good-sized fireplace in the living room . . . four or five large bedrooms and several baths. All in all, very comfortable quarters. They say this place is exceptional . . . it belonged to a French "Collaborationist" . . . for some reason he vacated just before D-Day, but left all of his furnish-



ings. I believe he merely happened to be in Paris on a business trip . . . which was no doubt lucky for him.

Lunch was served . . . by French women . . . and it was an excellent meal, except that it was much too heavy . . . if they kept that up, I'd have to go on a rugged diet. Omelette with spinach, and it takes the "Frogs" to make that, steak, potatoes, beans, crepe suzette, Port Salut cheese, coffee, cream, sugar . . . and all of it French food.

Whoever invented that story that there was no food in France? It probably is true in great cities like Paris. And, so they say, the Germans did ship out most of the produce from Normandy. But these people still ate well . . . you can see it in their full faces and their ruddy complexions, whipped by the sharp salt winds of the Channel and nourished by wholesome food.

After lunch we hopped into two jeeps and headed west across the Cherbourg peninsula. For some four hours we wound in and out of camps, installations, through villages . . . through Carentan, Sainte Mere-Eglise, Isigny, west almost to St. Sauveur de Vicomte, then south, close to German lines, back into Carentan and home.

Here War is close at hand . . . it has just passed by . . . and up these roads trudge our own infantry, full packs on backs, rifles, blankets, slodging on in the rain, toward the front that is "just up there." Huge German tanks, gutted and burnt, lie overturned at the road's edge. Wagons, trailers, German words on their sides, broken and left . . . bits of clothing, the field gray of the enemy. Dead horses occasionally in the gutters . . . there along the canal, as we pass over a bridge, a dead cow . . . a part of a horse, his forequarters and neck apparently blown to pieces. In the fields are scores of gliders, some of them wrecked in landing, others with fabric torn from them but otherwise intact . . . apparently our boys tore off the fabric to make cover for their dug-outs, protection from these chill winds and rains. Here is one spot where our airborne troops made a landing. Parachutes tangled in tree tops occasionally . . . but not many of these left . . . the French are wearing much of that silk. Wrecked airplanes . . . one lies in shallow water, burned to a skeleton. No evidence of the human dead, except close behind the fighting or where fighting

has just passed . . . our people have scrupulously removed the dead shortly after the battles. Wagons and trucks pass, carrying their terrible cargoes.

Some of these villages have taken terrific punishment . . . notably the towns of Isigny and Pont d'Abbe. Here the Germans massed their troops and shortly after D-Day our medium bombers hit these points. Literally whole streets are "gutted" . . . scarcely a house that is intact . . . most of them broken badly . . . many with nothing except walls or a lone chimney left standing . . . occasionally one sees a single wall with a whole series of chimney pots silhouetted against the sky. A fearful tribute to air power. The Heinies must have taken terrific punishment as they retreated, with no air power to protect them from the onslaughts of our bombers.

We cut back through side roads. Less activity here. We are nearing our front . . . along the roads our boys crouch in fairly deep "foxholes" . . . doubtless we do not see many of them, they are camouflaged in uniform and "tin hats" so that we are close upon them before we see them, as they peer at us from the rims of their holes with rifles ready for use.

As we approach a bridge, two American guards stop us . . . there are land mines placed on the bridge itself . . . nine of them, in plain view. Beyond the bridge, perhaps fifty yards, there are two steel gates across the road. The guards identify us, tell us which road to take . . . the Sergeant says, "I'll move those mines or you can drive over them, straddling them with your wheels." The General says, "Leave them alone. We can straddle them." So across we go . . . the Sergeant carelessly stepping across the mines, leading the way, and opening the gates ahead for us to pass.

This point is only a kilometer, or perhaps half of that, from the Germans. Obviously the gates are intended to impede anything but a tank that might try to rush through. The mines on the bridge would blow the bridge if a tank attempted passage . . . and would not help the tank either. (Frankly, we didn't know our course lay so close to the front . . . until we checked this point later. But Jerry's snipers, if he had any of them near, were good to us.)

Home and a good wash . . . after scraping the mud of the day from us. The cheery fire is a tonic after the raw rainy drive in the "air conditioned" jeeps . . . racing at forty to forty-five miles per hour over none too good roads that have been made far worse by bombs and thousands of heavy tracked vehicles . . . and those bumps have shaken down that heavy lunch so that food is inviting.

We eat . . . and well. Chicken, vegetables, washed down with a very tasty French red wine . . . and, for dessert, strawberries!!! Great red berries larger than a golf ball (well, anyhow as large) and sweet. To go with the strawberries the chef (yes the cook is truly an old Frenchman . . . his wife helps in the kitchen while two other French women serve) had baked two small cakes . . . pastry is his hobby. On one he had written, "*Vive les Allies*" and on the other "*Gloire et Honneur aux Allies*."

I'm not sure how much of this praise these French mean. One can't be too sure they are too happy about these Americans coming into their country . . . regardless of how much we brag about "liberating" them. For we have brought a lot of death and destruction with us . . . the Germans didn't have to "blast" their way into Normandy, it fell into their laps. We can hardly expect these people to take the philosophic, "long-range view" when their relatives have been killed by our bombs, their houses wrecked by our gun fire. They do not show any dislike, so far as I saw. Neither do they greet us with cheers. Only the youngsters . . . kids of eight or ten or less . . . wave or hold up the two fingers in the "V" sign. But what do they know of what they do? I suspect someone taught them to do it because it would "help make friends." You can't blame them for that, of course. But I don't think we help ourselves by blinding ourselves to the fact that perhaps these people aren't overly fond of us . . . at least many of them . . . and all our finely spun theories of what liberation portends doesn't mean much to them.

But worrying about the French attitude didn't keep me up very late . . . the jeep riding in the open air took care of that. And the deep, luxurious French beds took care of the rest.

Shortly after midnight gunfire wakened me. The anti-aircraft, or ack-ack, were sending up plenty of flak. You could hear the sound

of airplane engines overhead . . . not many . . . apparently a small German patrol out on some sort of deviltry. The flashes from our guns lighted up the sky. The firing came nearer . . . bright flashes lighted up the Cathedral spire some fifty yards out of my window. Steel missiles . . . pieces of flak . . . clattered down on the roof and on the stones of the courtyard below. In the distance bright flashes of flak burst. This continued for twenty minutes or so . . . then ceased. Next morning we learned that relatively few German planes had been over . . . had dropped a few bombs . . . no damage of any importance.

Mention of that Cathedral spire reminds me. In the tower, where the bells used to be . . . part of which has been torn away by bombs or shellfire . . . one can see what appear to be two German helmets peering across the edge of the stone parapet. Some folks insist they are actually German helmets, on the heads of two snipers who were shot there as they were propped up for their sniping. No one will go up the stairs of the bell tower . . . though they held services in the church last Sunday . . . for they say the tower is mined . . . to go up would mean suicide. No one has had time to de-mine the place to date.

20 June 1944 . . . Tuesday

Up early and off again in the jeeps. Along the roads there are German signs every fifty to 100 feet, on either side . . . "Achtung . . . Minen," or "Lookout . . . Mines," with a crude skull and cross bones on each. Actually it has been proved that these are largely bluff . . . there aren't mines nearly all of the places that these signs indicate. But they served a purpose for the Heinies . . . they must have kept the French away from places the Germans didn't want them (yes, they are written in French also, many of them) . . . and they make us extra work proving where mines are and mines aren't.

Early in the morning, we go to General Bradley's HQ . . . he's head of all Infantry in this whole operation, a Lieutenant General . . . and with General Quesada of our Fighter Command, General Anderson of our Bomber Command, a combined Ground-Air staff meeting is held.

You can imagine the fascination of sitting in on such a meeting. Here the cold, hard facts of the previous day's operations, the program for today . . . no propaganda . . . no sweet stories the way "the authorities feel the public should get the news." And I am glad I can say that the facts were most cheering. Our boys are doing better than any of us have any right to expect.

Off again after this meeting, to inspect other installations of our Air Force. Especially interesting are some of the instruments that detect enemy planes at great distances, give their location, etc. Truly this is a scientific War.

We visited, too, a new graveyard . . . where the dead are received, identified, personal belongings removed, and buried. Our own and the enemy as well. We looked on their faces . . . gazed at their tortured, broken bodies. This is War.

I can honestly say I am glad to have seen it . . . terrible as it is. It gave me a feeling that "Here is the final price. And, after all, if we must pay it, even this is better than slavery of any kind or description . . . than any kind of tyranny . . . benevolent or otherwise."

I left . . . sobered. Yet strengthened . . . strengthened by the thought that our boys, knowing that this may well be their fate, have the courage to go into battle and win . . . by the thought that all of us have it within us to do what these boys are doing, if it should be our lot to be called upon for this sacrifice. I can only pray . . . as I believe . . . that these boys have speeded the day when this War will see a relatively early close . . . and an end will be made to this sacrifice.

After lunch I left again, in a jeep, with General Anderson, who commands our Bomber Command . . . B-26 medium bombers. General Anderson is a "youngster," so to speak . . . perhaps thirty-eight, certainly not much over forty, if any. A charming, intelligent man. He has flown with his boys on their missions over here, but this was his first ground visit to France . . . his first opportunity to see what his bombers had been doing to some of the strongly fortified positions of the Germans.

We drove up toward Cherbourg . . . past Sainte Mere-Eglise . . . to a spot within some four to six miles of the lines as of today . . . the

Germans moved out of here six days ago . . . leaving guns behind.

Here the beach is broad, fairly smooth and low . . . to protect this area the Heinies had built some of their strongest large gun positions. Strings of huge steel-reinforced-concrete emplacements. These were built of steel rods, one inch in diameter, spaced about nine inches apart throughout the concrete . . . thicknesses of nine to twelve or fourteen feet . . . sides, tops . . . great concrete foundations. Some of the emplacements were forty to fifty feet square. Others, seventy to eighty feet long, and forty to fifty feet thick.

The Germans didn't think they were kidding when they claimed these were impregnable. But they didn't reckon with the power of "block-buster" bombs and heavy naval guns.

The entire area is literally "chewed to pieces" by bombs and shells. Everyone of these concrete emplacements is cracked or partially wrecked. And, they tell me, once one of these is damaged enough to disturb the foundation of the guns, the guns are useless . . . their fire can no longer be controlled. The Germans gave credence to this claim in some cases by having moved their guns back from the emplacements to set them up in the open, trying to use them again. In other spots, our paratroopers came in unexpectedly, caught them by surprise . . . and the Heinies left hurriedly. They did manage to damage their guns in most instances. But they left their ammunition . . . at one gun I saw a shell on a cart, apparently being wheeled up to the gun for firing, when they were surprised, left just as it was.

The bomb craters are huge holes . . . one could bury a small house in many of them. It is "touchy" business prowling around here. One can't be too sure there aren't any mines left nearby . . . your main assurance is that the Germans had to live here, so would not mine their own ground, and left so hurriedly they had no time to mine before leaving.

Nevertheless we walked gingerly . . . keeping to what seemed to be paths where others had walked recently. One doesn't pick up miscellaneous articles either . . . hand grenades, "potato mashers," and so on lie about in profusion. Near one gun I saw . . . perhaps eighteen inches from the little path we were following . . . a package



of HE (high explosive), a demolition package used to crack concrete walls—about 12" x 6" x 8" . . . enough to blast a huge hole in almost anything. It was one of our own . . . I presume a demolition package carried by one of our paratroopers and abandoned by him. We left it where it lay.

I spied what seemed to be a string of shiny beads . . . called the General's attention to it. He couldn't make out what it was either . . . we agreed we wouldn't pick it up . . . except at the end of a stick. So we got a stick . . . gingerly the General raised it . . . it was not attached to anything . . . nothing happened. We examined it more closely. It was, actually, a string of light, white metal beads on a chain. I asked one of our artillery Lieutenants, working nearby, what it was. He explained that it was a German "flexible ramrod" or cleaning tool for German rifles. I kept that for a souvenir . . . I can use it to clean the German rifle I have from the Beachhead. Or it might make an interesting bit of "costume jewelry."

We left the area . . . to several high ranking U. S. Navy Officers who were also making an inspection . . . and headed for home.

Half way home, I noticed bursts of flak to the south and west . . . that was unusual. One doesn't see German planes in the air during the day. That in itself is certainly a great tribute to the superlative job our Air Force has done in driving the Luftwaffe from the sky here. As we approached a village we noticed people gazing skyward. French people turned to us, as we passed, pointed up and cried, "*Les Boches.*" We did find a half-dozen planes overhead . . . some we identified as our own P-47's . . . one or two we were not sure of. But we saw no actual firing between planes. Later we were told an ME-109 had been shot down at this time, and the German pilot had bailed out, to be captured.

Near home, as we drove along, we were jarred by a terrific explosion in a field to our left, perhaps 150 yards from us. I still don't know what it was . . . but a great column of dirt and smoke rose high into the air. Someone said it must have been a mine that exploded. And in this field . . . as in many of them . . . thousands of red poppies

colored the tall grass. There are poppies in Normandy as well as in Flanders.

In one small village I was intrigued to see a cute, tow-headed little girl, hanging on to her mother's hand and with her other hand holding a pilot chute which billowed out in the breeze (Pilot Chute? . . . that's the small chute that's released first and opened by a spring, to pull out the main chute). A child's toy, improvised from the weapons of War.

The day was well-nigh spent. We hurried back to quarters, picked up our baggage, and went to the landing strip. Our ship was ready. In a few moments we were off again for England.

This day was bright and clear . . . visibility was good. Even more impressive than yesterday . . . for we could see more . . . was the huge armada that lay off the beachhead. The convoys moved unmolested back and forth from the English shore.

It seems almost unbelievable . . . here were thousands of enemy ships right under the Germans' very noses . . . yet the much touted Luftwaffe made no daylight attempt to stop this continuous flow of war materials onto the shores of France . . . and their night attempts were little more than nuisance raids.

I was struck too . . . on thinking of it after we got home . . . that we had no fighter escort coming home. No one seemed to think of it . . . yet we had three Generals aboard. After a few days on shore you simply take it for granted that the Luftwaffe dare not come out after you.

Two hours after take-off we were home . . . in England.

If my guess is any good, from what I saw on this trip, the end of Hitler's hell is coming faster than any of us have dared to let ourselves think.

Coming home, we were interested too in what had been happening, during these two days, here in Southern England . . . what of Hitler's "Flying Bombs," which had been stirring up a bit of trouble during the three or four days just before we left? Apparently this attack is fading too.

There never was much to it, as I see it, except a desperate attempt on the Heinies' part to bolster their own morale. German psychology

seems to "go" for stunts of this type . . . they pulled a similar trick at the tail-end of the last war with their Big Bertha, shooting some seventy-five miles into Paris. Sure, they did some damage. I saw some of it then . . . the Cathedral, for example, where a shell from Big Bertha exploded Easter morning, 1918, during Easter Services. True, also, these "flying bombs" do some damage. But there are so few of them, relatively, and they seem unable to direct them except into general areas . . . their military significance seems negligible.

Perhaps it is no wonder Hitler believes in this making of "bogey-man" faces at his enemy. He climbed from slime to power by that technique . . . by holding great mass meetings, yelling at the top of his lungs, threatening what terrible things he'd do to anyone who dared to interfere with him. And he got away with it for a long time, too . . . he moved into the Ruhr . . . the French wanted to act, but the British refused . . . Munich came . . . appeasement was still the policy . . . no one wanted to tackle him . . . no one was ready.

But it seems ridiculous for the Heinies to think that technique will still work . . . that by making ugly faces, in the midst of all their reverses, they can scare anyone into anything. I feel sure that the "mystery" of the "flying bombs" has already lost its scare feature. I'll gamble that the danger from these flying bombs is not as great to any individual in the London area, as the peace-time hazard of driving a car in heavy traffic in any one of our American cities.

Isn't this another evidence of Hitler's desperation?

. . . . .

There is much more I'd like to write about. But I'm afraid I've rambled along much too long already. I'll have to save the rest for another time when I find a chance to write again.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Put'.



# 10

ENGLAND

29 June 1944

Dear Folks:

Cherbourg has fallen. Of course you've read about it. But perhaps it doesn't mean to you what it does to us. Here it means that more of Normandy is ours . . . more room in which to operate . . . more activity on the "far shore" . . . that more of us will move over to take up permanent posts over there.

So this will probably be my last chance to write from England. And there are so many things I'd like to write about . . . of happenings, things, and people here on this "tight little Isle" . . . that I'll dash off this before we get too busy with moving. For I am going over with the General, when he moves, to work directly with him there.

The "flying bombs" still come over. But their numbers are less . . . air raid warnings are fewer. Previously, they sent over some during the day, then perhaps a few just before midnight, and kept up a desultory firing during the night until about 5:00 a. m. when they would step up the number until about 7:00 a. m.

Recently however I have heard very few early morning sirens . . . it has been days since I actually saw a "fly bomb" (or "doodle

bug" or "buzz bomb," as they are variously called). Perhaps this is due to the heavy attacks our bombers have been making on their "ski sites," or launching sites . . . maybe the Heinies are running low on projectiles. Whatever the reason, the effects, in actual damage and in nuisance, are definitely less. When they have hit they have done real damage, there is no question about that. I saw a "pub," along a country road, that had been completely demolished by one of them.

But as a military weapon they are a flop. They can't direct them, except into general areas . . . and their numbers are far too small to amount to anything of importance. Hitting any military objective is pure chance.

Sometime ago I told you of visiting the famous town and school of Eton . . . or of driving through there. One Sunday recently we visited Eton again, to show the place to Major Al Lucal, an old friend of mine and 1st War side-kick from Chicago, who stopped in to see us. This time school was in session, so we had a chance to see the boys . . . the younger lads in short jackets, older boys in tails . . . all in high hats. We talked with several groups of these boys and found them all most cordial and courteous, offering to show us around the grounds and explain everything to us. We grew especially interested in one lad of seventeen and his younger brother of fourteen. The older boy was a really handsome lad . . . very intelligent . . . incidentally, he wore a monocle, for (so he said) he had only one weak eye. He is already dexterous in its use.

He volunteered that he was specializing in American history and immediately began asking us questions. "Are you a Democrat or Republican?" he began. One of our party said, "Well, I'm in the Army." The youngster snapped, "You must be a Republican." A Colonel spoke up, "I'm a Democrat . . . I'm from the South." The boy looked puzzled and said, "But I thought Mrs. Roosevelt's activities with the Negroes had turned the South against the Democrats."

The boy had a pretty good idea about America . . . tinged with the "slant" of English interpretation, but nevertheless surprisingly de-

tailed. Quizzing him, one got the impression that this sort of intensive study of America in their school was a fairly new idea.

The boys showed us through the grounds and buildings . . . into the quadrangle, where part of the building had been destroyed (a long time ago) by a bomb, the cloisters, the library, the large assembly hall or auditorium, and across the playing fields. They told us of the customs of the school . . . of their form of hazing, called "fagging" . . . of the poor scholars (poor financially . . . winners of scholarships which enable them to attend). They told us of their *houses*, somewhat like our fraternity houses yet with marked differences . . . though fathers elect, before their sons enter, which house the boys will live in, and many activities are by "houses." They told us there are approximately 1,100 boys in upper and lower forms . . . some as young as twelve, the oldest eighteen.

As it was Sunday, at 5:00 o'clock they took us to the chapel . . . an ancient stone edifice, built in the 1400's. The service is most impressive. The procession files in . . . certain select "big boys" in checkered pants, other big boys in white surplices, red robed little lads of the choir (boys with good voices who have won music scholarships) . . . finally the dark robes and bald heads of the dignitaries of school and Church.

The seats are arranged so all face the center of the huge auditorium . . . like the House of Commons . . . altar at the far front . . . the great pipe organ booming out from the rear. Here English tradition is made . . . for generations here it has been kept.

We learned the names of the two lads . . . Julian and Adrian Cadbury. Cadbury . . . that's almost a household word in England . . . like Hershey's in America. Their father is head of the family that manufactures chocolates and other chocolate products . . . is a director of the Bank of England. You see "Cadbury" staring at you from the newspapers, from the posters along the road.

Another Sunday, Captain Schilling (the General's Aide) and I went back to Eton to have tea with these lads, at their invitation . . . to a spot not unlike the inevitable "sugar bowl" of an American college campus. Only this was old, quaint . . . alongside the Thames River.



The place was crowded with Eton boys . . . the lads had had to make a reservation. These are fine boys. And from them I got my most favorable impression of the English . . . my most favorable insight into their character, intelligence, courtesy, poise, diplomatic manners. Of course this is a "public school" . . . which means it is *most private* (Don't ask me how they wangled that sort of nomenclature). I believe they call their public schools (as we understand the term) "state schools."

Naturally I contrasted this with what we have in America. I suspect we have few schools where our boys can get such a thorough scholastic training . . . as well as polish and diplomatic technique. I wondered whether this was not one of the basic differences between the English and us. They train their select to a high point. But, so far as I can observe, the great mass of their children does not get anywhere as adequate an education as does the mass of our children in the U. S. A. I wonder if theirs is not a hang-over from feudal days, while ours is far more typical of real democracy.

The Church service I mentioned was of course the very essence of the Church of England. And it reminded me of a "crack" made by King Farouk one evening in our flat in Cairo.

We had been kidding Farouk about the Moslems . . . he being a Moslem, naturally. He said, "But you Christians are far more narrow-minded than we Moslems." So we asked him how he figured that. He answered, "In our Koran and in our teachings, we count Christ as one of the Great Prophets . . . though naturally we think Mohammed was the Greatest. But you Christians, in your Bible and in your teachings, deny the importance or the very existence of Mohammed. You are narrow-minded and intolerant."

Young Cadbury's interest in American politics brings up the current interest in our American political scene. Are the English interested?

The newspapers have carried detailed accounts of the Republican Convention . . . before, during, after . . . of Dewey's nomination. And, in the midst of their discussion of the Republican Convention, they bring in the name of F.D.R. more often than that of Dewey. They

seem to feel, as I read it, that it is Roosevelt and the English vs. Dewey . . . and the play they give Willkie would make you think Willkie was an avowed F.D.R. man. They tell of Dewey's overwhelming vote . . . but no English newspaper I have read has mentioned on what ballot he was nominated. True, their reports are from British correspondents . . . but how could they miss the point that would be No. 1 question to any American?

Referring to the Convention they say (I quote) . . . "one of the dullest in Republican history." Of the platform they say, "a platform over which the younger Republicans are shaking their heads as being a 'colossal monument to obscurity.'" Further they report, "There is no victory mood in Chicago, and in New York and the rest of the country the general feeling seems to be that Dewey will not be able to give Mr. Roosevelt as good a run for his money as Wendell Willkie." To bolster their point they quote "PM" . . . though they do say, "PM is ardently democratic."

All of this has brought this question to my mind:

The British, or English at least, insist that any deviation from all-out international collaboration on the part of the United States has America headed for "obscurity" . . . and in this they are loudly assisted by our own "Union Now" people and those most given to castigating those whom they call "isolationists." (Just what an isolationist is I'm not sure . . . never have been. Apparently, from the interventionists story, an isolationist is anyone who doesn't agree in every particular with everything the interventionists want the U.S. to do.)

Well, anyhow . . . these enthusiasts insist that our only salvation lies in all-out world activities . . . in world-wide politics . . . in guaranteeing the integrity of institutions and political set-ups such as Great Britain has built up.

But then I start remembering . . . for the past scores of years there have been really only two outstanding exponents of this "broad international" policy . . . or should it be called "empire policy" . . . namely Britain and France. The arch-isolationist nation has been the United States (so they say) . . . with Russia more or less following a

similar line, except for her Communistic propaganda during recent years.

What has happened? France is "broke" . . . England was broke, until we took on her obligations . . . and is still "badly bent." The U.S.A. prospered and became the strongest nation in the world. Russia today seems a close second. If England and France are to be rescued and rebuilt, it must be by the productive strength and fighting power of the U.S.A. and Russia.

Still, our internationalists insist, unless we discard all tendencies to take care of ourselves first . . . unless we embark on an unlimited program of "co-operating with the world" . . . we, as a nation, are doomed.

Why, I wonder, must we adopt this alleged "panacea for all ills" when it has brought disaster to those who would sell it to us?

Well, that's the end of that oration. But maybe someone can set me thinking right.

A recent guest at our house was Elliott Roosevelt . . . now a Colonel in the Air Corps . . . head of a Photo Reconnaissance Group. He's been over several times and I've found him a very likable fellow, easy to meet, pleasant, intelligent, quick on the trigger . . . I've been most favorably impressed. They tell me he's doing an outstanding job in this photo recon work, too . . . and I have reasons to believe that those who tell me aren't kidding and that they really know. I'll gamble that Elliott will get his "Star" (i.e. be made a Brigadier General) before this War is over.

Not long ago we went to a cocktail party and buffet supper given by Bebe Daniels and Ben Lyon. Remember 'em . . . you old-timers? They used to be well known in movies in the U.S.A. . . . are still popular over here . . . have lived here a good many years. Ben is a Lieutenant Colonel in the Air Corps (U.S.). This was a celebration of their fourteenth wedding anniversary . . . some kind of a record for movie people, perhaps.

Of course, there were numerous celebrities there . . . Wesley Ruggles (movie producer), Lieut. Gen. "Jimmy" Doolittle, several lesser American Generals, and so on. But the man who interested me

most was A. V. Alexander, First Lord of The Admiralty. He's a bluff, hearty man . . . a Labor Party man . . . and the General and I had a lot of fun talking with him. He (Alexander) insisted that much of Europe's trouble was America's fault . . . because we had not backed up Wilson's commitments after the last war. We reminded him that certainly he, of all people, knew that American Government procedure was such that no American President . . . past or present . . . ever had authority to *commit* the U.S.A. to anything without approval of our Congress. We reminded him of some of England's "failures to back up commitments" . . . to France when Hitler moved into the Ruhr, to Czechoslovakia, to Poland.

It was a good "rough and tumble" session. The part I liked best was that it was all in good humor, on both sides. A. V. Alexander won my respect and admiration . . . for he is a smart politician, as well as an intelligent man . . . and he goes after what he wants *for his country* . . . with it he has a keen sense of humor. I wish we had a lot of that type of men fighting for what America needs.

I've been having a most interesting time on my job . . . working with this Medical Board, handling combat flying crew men who become exhausted . . . "tired bodies" we call them. We see many, many interesting lads. Some of them make tears come to your eyes . . . tears of sheer pride in the courage and tenacity that some of these pilots, navigators, bombardiers, radio men, gunners have exhibited.

Let me tell you a story of two . . . and you can believe these are true . . . these boys don't come to us to "brag" . . . it is a serious Board session.

One Sergeant tail gunner in a B-17 (Flying Fortress) found that the entire tail of the B-17 had been shot away . . . that he was falling earthward, in the tail section. He was hemmed in. He managed to *kick* his way out, literally . . . at 1,000 feet he jumped clear . . . at 700 feet his chute opened . . . he landed safely.

He was put into a hospital for observation, though he had no wounds. There he was kept for months . . . under observation, while the doctors tried various treatments on him. The Sergeant meanwhile

was insisting that he was okeh . . . he wanted to get out . . . and, moreover, he wanted to get back to combat. Finally, he refused to take any more treatments. He could have been court-martialed for that. Instead they sent him to our Board.

A member of our Board asked him, "Why did they keep you in the hospital?" He answered, naively, "Well, they seemed to think I should have been nervous!!" (Note: The Board returned him to combat, as he wished.)

Here's another: A pilot of a B-26 (Marauder . . . medium bomber) prepared to make his bomb run over his target on his first mission. As he opened his bomb bays the ship shuddered, lurched, lost 500 feet in a few seconds . . . controls became confused, his inter-communication system (within the ship) went out. Something was drastically wrong. He tried to jettison his bombs, but they were stuck, would not release. Believing the ship lost, the other pilot and navigator both bailed out at once. But this boy decided to nurse the ship back, if he could. He turned for home . . . flak caught one engine, crippling it so that it almost quit. He fought his way back to the Isle of Wight . . . things were getting progressively worse . . . still the bombs would not release. So he told the rest of the crew, to whom he could talk, to bail out . . . they did. He set the ship on a course out to sea . . . went over the side in his chute.

As his chute billowed out above him he watched the ship turn in an arc and, in a fairly steep glide, come directly toward him. The bad engine had picked up, turning the ship . . . it seemed inevitable that the propellers would catch him or his chute.

Suddenly another chute billowed out from the approaching plane. The tail gunner had come forward (he couldn't be talked to) found everyone gone . . . as of course the pilot had thought him gone, too . . . and left right then. This lessened weight in the tail raised the after section, the ship went into a steeper dive and passed well below the pilot and his chute. All landed safely.

Another thumb-nail sketch or two: A 41-year-old Sergeant gunner . . . 67 missions over France . . . a former salesman of Buxton "Keytainers" for five Southern states . . . plenty of rough missions . . .

medals. He could have had his release anytime he had asked, under the 38-year age ruling. He was asked by a Board member, "I thought this combat flying was a young man's game?" His answer, "It is . . . that is, I mean they do it better."

Another flyer . . . sixty-some missions . . . excellent record . . . limited education . . . in civil life he was a "pants presser" . . . his reason for being in flying, "Well, I thought it would be a good way to learn to fly."

I can't see any of these boys anymore without wondering what type of "guts" may be inside those blouses.

. . . . .

Later . . . 6 July 1944

Last Sunday we had a sort of evacuation-party at our house . . . as we shall be on our way before long, cocktails and buffet supper. It was planned for on the lawn . . . so it rained . . . and we had a full house, but everyone seemed to have a good time.

Some sixty-five to seventy-five guests . . . King Peter, Queen Alexandra, Her Mother Anastasia, Generals Vandenberg, Doolittle, and a half dozen other Major Generals and Brigadiers, Bebe Daniels and Ben Lyon, Col. Elliott Roosevelt, numerous Group Captains and Wing Commanders of the R. A. F., Colonels and Majors of the English Army, a scattering of U. S. Army Air Evacuation Nurses.

Talking with Elliott Roosevelt, the matter of his Star came up . . . he offered to bet he wouldn't get it (i.e. get to be a Brigadier General). I took a bet for \$100 with him that he would get said star before the War was over. We shall see.

Tuesday was the FOURTH of JULY . . . just another day here . . . we worked as usual. For two reasons . . . we have work to do . . . and it hardly would be good taste to have too much of a celebration here in England. They say the boys observed it, a bit, in France . . . with artillery salvos. But, all in all, I suspect it was just another day of War for most everyone.

That's all, folks . . . for England . . . my address is still the same, and will continue to be, so far as I know. If it changes I'll let you know.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Put".

P. S.—Got my promotion recently . . . to Lieutenant Colonel . . . if I said that did not please me I know you'd suspect me of prevarication . . . and you'd be right.





# 11

## NORMANDY

5 August 1944

Dear Folks:

Here in Normandy time is suspended. There are no days of the week . . . no days of the month. There are only mornings, afternoons, evenings . . . things to be done, meals, and sleep.

The only reality is what happens "up front" . . . where the rumble of guns is almost constant by day and by night . . . where the great groups of planes overhead are always headed.

No hours of the day . . . time has no meaning except to indicate when something is to be done. Duty is around the clock. Sundays are just days. Holidays or half-days are forgotten terms. Reminds me of Lorado Taft's group in Washington Park, Chicago . . . TIME stands still while generations pass in review.

It is almost a month since I came to Normandy on a permanent basis. A short time. Yet it seems as though we "belong" here . . . as though this is normal . . . other things, other places, take on a vagueness.

We are comfortably set up at this Advanced Headquarters. Our offices are in small villas on the coast, at the edge of this fishing

village. I am quartered in a big room in one of these villas which was but little damaged by the bombs and shell fire of D-Day.

Two windows look out across the Channel. And through French doors I step out onto a good-sized balcony that makes swell sitting in the evening. At high tide the waves almost wash the foundations of the house . . . at night they put me to sleep (as though I need anything to help me sleep). I even have a fair-sized bathroom . . . well, anyhow, a washbowl and mirror. A wooden shack "out back" houses the rest of the equipment. It serves as well today as it did in Grandpappy's time. I also have a good-sized clothes closet. There's a white marble fireplace . . . good looking . . . with firewood in it. I haven't had a fire, for wood is precious to these natives and I don't need heat. I sleep in a French bed . . . i.e., unless some "brass hat" arrives and accommodations are crowded. Then the VIPER gets the bed, and I go to my bedding roll on an Army cot across the room.

There are no lights, but it doesn't matter . . . it doesn't get dark until almost 11:00 p. m. Both faucets run cold water . . . you'd be surprised how quickly one forgets about hot water. It isn't important for shaving anyhow. A bath? We've got a shower room now, warm water too, right next door. For almost three weeks I did okeh with cold sponge baths from the washbowl tap . . . yes, I did so . . . well, once or twice. But you don't get very dirty in three weeks.

Perhaps I should confess that I chiseled this set-up. But, as I am acting as Chief of Staff of this Advanced HQ, I just exercised a bit of prerogative and took what I wanted. Many of our officers are in tents. Tents aren't uncomfortable. But canvas doesn't shed flak too well, and we get a bit now and then.

At low tide kids play on the sandy beach. A few older Frenchmen, far out on the sand or in shallow water, baskets at their sides, look for shell fish of some sort . . . mussels, small shrimp, or lobsters. Fishing boats bob up and down at anchor just a little farther out, for the French are allowed to fish again . . . but only the older men, over 48 . . . others must do other work or join the new French Army which is being conscripted.

Off shore lie a great number of our ships, as far as the eye can see to the west, so close together they form a solid line against the blue water. To the east, more ships . . . the line disappears behind a distant promontory. These are our transports . . . loaded with ammunition and supplies . . . and warships of many types and sizes. Landing craft ply restlessly back and forth. Some unload at the docks in the village. Others drive in close to the shallow beach and wait for low tide. Then lying level on the dry sand, they drop end platforms . . . trucks and mobile cranes move out to them to take their cargoes.

This line of ships has been there since D-Day . . . the unloading has been ceaseless. Yet never during the daylight, and seldom at night, has the Luftwaffe dared to attempt an attack on them. What a commentary on the reduced power of the touted Luftwaffe . . . what evidence of the job our Air Force has done.

Rolls of tangled barbed wire lie here and there . . . remnants of the German's beach defenses. Three-legged horses of steel and wood still stand on portions of the beach. On D-Day there were teller mines on top these horses and at high tide they were just below the surface, to blow up any landing craft that bumped into them.

On shore, there are green gardens all about these houses . . . peas, beans, cabbage, cauliflower, lettuce, onions, tomatoes grow luxuriantly. The French tend these vegetables . . . and they eat them.

I almost got into trouble my very first evening over here. We had brought a "Normandy tourist" with us . . . one of the officials from our Embassy in London. After supper he and I sat in headquarters playing gin rummy. It grew late, and dark. Finally, about midnight, we finished our game and started for our quarters, four houses down the line. We had not thought to bring our flashlights so we stumbled along in the dark.

"Halt! Who's there?" yelled a sentry, from out of the black. "Officer of the post," says I. "Advance and be recognized," says he. I advanced. He halted me again a few paces away. "What's the password?" says he. Believe me, I didn't know it . . . it hadn't entered my head, until that moment, that I might need the password. Maybe

my face wasn't red, but you can imagine that I wasn't too happy trying to explain, while he fingered his carbine, why I was wandering around at midnight, with a civilian in tow, and didn't know the password. Some of these boys have nervous trigger fingers. Finally I convinced him I was okeh and he let us pass. But we had to go through the same procedure again before we reached the haven of our billet. (I haven't pulled that trick since.)

An evening or so later, I had dinner at the General's house and, coming back, just before dark, I saw a group of French men and women on the road of the village. It was apparent from their animated conversation . . . they were talking with hands, shoulders, and mouths . . . that something had just happened. I asked a nearby M.P. what it was all about. The French had just finished giving a French girl a "close hair cut" . . . she had been too friendly with the Heinies while they were here. The M.P. said this was the fifth or sixth such "hair cut" in the village during the day.

The next day was July 14th . . . Bastille Day. French flags flew from most of the houses, and a large Tricolor caught the breeze from the Cathedral steeple . . . the first time in five years the French dared celebrate the day, openly. Special masses were held at 9:00 a. m. and at 4:00 p. m.

At eight o'clock in the evening there was a celebration in front of the Town Hall, or Mairie. An American Army band and a company of some 100 American soldiers . . . perhaps 1,500 French civilians. The Mayor made a speech, as did other leading citizens. A chorus of French children sang "La Marseillaise" and other French songs. Our band played "The Star-Spangled Banner" and several French songs. Our Commanding General made a speech, in French.

Then the entire assembly marched through the streets to the Cathedral where flags and flowers decorated a monument to "Les Morts pour la France." Wreaths were placed on the monument . . . short speeches . . . a litany chanted by a leader, repeated by the rest. A small American plane flew overhead, dropping flowers.

This over, we went back to the Mairie, and in a rather small room a table was spread with cakes and wine of the country. Soon

the place was packed with French, Americans, and a few British. There were many toasts and much singing . . . "Madelon," the Air Corps Song, "Annie Laurie" . . . toasts, "Vive la Angleterre," "Vive la Russie," "Vive les Etats Unis," "Vive la Republique Francaise." Some Britisher yelled, "Vive Scotland." But our boys from down by the Rio Grande missed a swell chance to yell, "Vive Texas."

It was a lot of fun . . . and I suspect the French enjoyed it even more than we did.

The days passed with relatively slow progress "up front" . . . weather, for the most part, was bad. We did take la Haye de Puits, St. Lo, and make other small advances. But the going was tough. Across marshy land where the boys waded in water up to their necks . . . through these endless Normandy hedgerows surrounding the small fields . . . hedgerows old and tough, many with tree trunks or stumps that stop even tanks until a hole is blasted through . . . and beyond each hedgerow more mines. It has been much like house-to-house fighting.

The British launched a drive in the Caen area . . . hundreds of our planes helped blast the Heinies before the push got under way. They gained some five miles and stopped.

Meanwhile our own new push was in the making. We prayed for weather, but it was slow in coming. It never gets hot here, seldom really warm . . . almost every day has hours of fog or low clouds.

The new D-Day arrived . . . was postponed . . . and this was repeated until we all were irritable and restless. Weather would not give us a break.

Finally, the weather outlook improved and all was set. That D-Day morning I went down to the front. The spot selected for observation was an old stone house, rather badly battered, two miles from the jumping-off line . . . our foremost troops having been pulled back to permit heavy bombing of this starting line. This was in the vicinity of St. Lo.

We had quite a party . . . not in numbers but in stars. Nine Generals, wearing a total of 16 stars, were in the group. I shall mention no names. For security reasons it is not wise to name high-

ranking officers in this area. (You will note I have mentioned no VIPERS in this letter, although we have had lots of important visitors . . . American, British, Mexican, and Russian.)

As H-Hour approached, great groups of fighter-bombers began coming over . . . P-47's, P-51's. Peeling off into single file they made steep dives over the front and dropped their bombs . . . the boom, boom, boom of explosions brought rising columns of smoke and dust. They kept on coming . . . hundreds of them. Five, ten, twenty minutes went by . . . and minutes can be long at such a time . . . while this pounding went on, blasting their strong points, their anti-aircraft and artillery.

At the same time that the first fighter-bombers started their blasting, our artillery let loose. A battery to our left, another to our right . . . from behind us a terrific blast as a battery of heavies opened up. In rapid succession these big guns threw over huge shells . . . we could not see them as they passed low over our heads, but their "whoosh, whoosh, whoosh" cut a path of flight that could not be mistaken. The house, even the ground, trembled and shook.

After some twenty minutes there is a brief lull . . . and the green, peaceful countryside belies the hell that is just up ahead. Cattle graze nearby. But in the field just ahead a company of our infantry waits word to move up . . . we see tanks under the trees of other fields.

There's something strange about all this. A half-hour of bombing and artillery fire has gone by . . . yet not a single enemy plane can we see . . . there is no answering artillery fire from the enemy. I see no flak, though some of our party say they can see it bursting over the front line. I see none of our planes hit. The enemy must be groggy.

Single files of infantry move up the road past the house . . . a line on either side of the road . . . the men walk at fairly long intervals so that any single shell would not hit too many of them. They plod slowly ahead . . . with full equipment, some with fixed bayonets . . . sober faces.

A string of Red Cross emblazoned ambulances passes, headed up front. Machine gun and rifle fire breaks out heavily to the south and east.

The weather is none too good. Ceiling was high enough for the dive bombing, but now we hear the heavies overhead . . . the four-engined stuff. They can't bomb from low altitudes . . . we can't see them, for they are above the clouds.

For almost a half hour these heavies drone overhead. Then there is a break in the cloud layer . . . the sun peeps through . . . the clouds are breaking. Far above we make out a large group of heavies . . . B-17's.

White flares are dropped from planes high up . . . numbers of them . . . they are marking flares. The light wind bends their straight lines into crooked trails.

Groups pass over . . . more groups appear . . . hundreds and hundreds of planes . . . B-17's and B-24's. We can't see the bombs drop up ahead, but soon there are terrific explosions . . . thousands of them. A heavy battery behind us begins again . . . "Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh" their huge shells rush over us. Lighter batteries on our left and right join in . . . a tattoo compared to the heavy guns and bombs.

It is noon . . . we break out our "K-Rations" and begin our lunch. More heavies go over . . . more thunder up ahead . . . to the south and west machine guns and rifles maintain their steady firing. A huge column of black smoke to the southeast rises 2,000 feet or more . . . another smoke column to the southwest. Perhaps ammunition dumps have been hit.

Through all this, three L-5's have been flying lazily back and forth . . . observing the battle, directing fire. (L-5's? They are light, slow, unarmed, two-seater planes.) Unconcernedly they go about their work . . . nothing bothers them. Another great advantage of complete control of the air.

The heavies have finished and have left. B-26's (medium bombers) arrive to take over the job. They hammer the line and the roads behind. Such a concentration of air power has probably never before been seen. We've sent over practically everything except barrage balloons.

Our lunch is finished . . . eaten from off the flat top of the hood of the jeep. The "show" has moved farther across the front, so that



we can see little except the planes as they come and go. Our party leaves, and we find our way back over roads jammed with every kind of vehicle . . . tanks guard crossroads . . . ack-ack batteries in fields. Nearer our HQ a half-dozen transports wing their way in from England, bringing personnel and supplies. More fighter-bombers roar south, their heavy bombs visible under their wings, returning for another "go" at the enemy.

Of course, there is much I haven't told you . . . much I can't tell you. And at best one person sees only a small portion of the action in a push like this.

I won't try to tell you how our armored columns knifed deep into the enemy during the days that followed . . . how our infantry followed up, wiping out pockets of resistance that were left . . . how our fighter-bombers cut bridges, shutting off retreat of enemy tanks and motor vehicles, then cut them to pieces with bombs, machine gun and cannon fire from the air . . . nor of the thousands of prisoners captured and enemy dead buried. That you will have read in your newspapers. Moreover, though I have heard the stories fresh from those who took part, I did not see those actions myself.

But the push is a tremendous success. We took our losses, of course. A few days ago I attended the funeral service for a war correspondent who was killed at the start of the drive (Bede Irvin, of Kansas City . . . an AP photographer). It was in one of our new cemeteries . . . one I had visited some six weeks before. How the white crosses have multiplied! And as the Chaplain read the simple soldier's service, more bodies were being lowered into new graves a few feet away. Squadrons of fighting planes roared overhead . . . the battle goes on. Above the sound of the Chaplain's voice came the voices of Negro soldiers busily burying the dead. For the thousands there are no such services.

I came back to find a letter which told me of a "strike" of German prisoners of war, working in plants in the States . . . a "strike" because the PW's didn't like some bulletin that was put up, and because they wanted more pay.

I learn from other letters that there are numerous instances where such PW's are taken out for ice cream and cake after having had good lunches . . . of providing them with bottles of beer to lighten their evening hours.

It seems unbelievable. It makes me shudder to contemplate what will happen to an America that refuses to face the facts of life . . . that seems to believe that by being soft we can protect ourselves against aggressors. Have we gone so far in believing the "Santa Claus philosophy"?

I am sure of this . . . there will be millions of Americans coming home . . . who will have left behind many, many thousands of their friends in foreign graves . . . who will have vastly other ideas of how we must build that "brave new world" so glibly talked about. And God help those who promote such insults to our dead as to fail even in the handling of prisoners sent back to our shores.

We see quite a few of the prisoners we are taking over here. A few days ago as I walked to the mess hall, I noticed a young Heinie, under guard. He had just been captured . . . he was one of the rasher lads who had dared to try strafing back of our lines during daylight. He had been shot down, his plane catching fire, and he had bailed out . . . but not before the fire had burned him. He was a tall, lean, sandy-haired boy of perhaps twenty-two . . . his black leather flying jacket bore the wings and swastika of the Luftwaffe over his right breast.

His face was startlingly white . . . covered with an ointment to ease the pain of face burns. His hair was singed and curled close to the right side of his head . . . his neck was burned. Even his eyelids must have been burned for they too were white with the ointment. As I passed he looked at me. His face was that of a circus clown. When he blinked he reminded me of an owl annoyed by the light. He sat on a bench, head in his hands . . . a dispirited, war-weary, hopeless looking lad.

The next day I saw another . . . also an airman, captured as was the first, after bailing out of his ship. He was uninjured. Snappily dressed in his leather jacket, high black boots, he carried himself with

an air of assurance . . . of cockiness. He had not yet learned what War can do to lads like himself.

Our PW interrogators tell me the youngsters brought up under Nazi doctrine are usually defiant and cocky. They can't believe that Germany is losing . . . they can't believe they can lose. The older men . . . and the Russians, Poles, and others whom they have forced into their army (we captured many of these also) are different. Usually they give up readily, are glad to be prisoners and have it over. One of them made a crack, unintentionally I am sure, which amused me. He was being questioned, immediately after capture, about his experience during the days of heavy bombing and shell fire he had just undergone. He commented, "There's no future in it."

So we have our amusing incidents. I was intrigued the other day to see a fat brown and white hen, tied by a string from her leg to the tent peg of a young Captain. I'll gamble there was "no great future" for her.

So it goes. Our armor pushes rapidly ahead . . . we have gone through Rennes and are well beyond . . . that's more than half way across the Brest peninsula. The armor seems to be fanning out and having success everywhere. We have gone farther than we even dared hope a week or so ago.

The infantry follows up . . . the British are making a good drive to the east. And we follow the news of successes in Italy and on the Russian front.

Here at HQ things are quieter . . . the war is moving away. A week ago we were getting some Heinie planes over at night. One night we had three different outbursts of ack-ack when enemy planes came over at 1:30, 4:00, and 4:50 a.m. But since our drive got under way, and since the British started their push, the Luftwaffe seems preoccupied with other things. We haven't heard a plane in some nights.

A few afternoons ago I walked back of our HQ building, out on to the beach. The sun was bright and warm and the sands were alive with bathers. Mammass sat on the sand with their little tots digging away or splashing in the shallow water. Young French girls and

boys and our GI's, were swimming. Nearby landing craft unloaded their cargoes onto waiting trucks. A "duck" (amphibious vehicle) came in from off shore, tooted for the bathers to make way . . . it almost shook itself as it left the water and climbed the bank to the road. A strange contrast of peacetime fun and War activity.

I was puzzled at first as to why all the bathers . . . then it dawned on me . . . it was Sunday. The French were having a day off.

As the War moves away, so too must we move. And by the time this letter is mailed, we shall have packed our equipment and be on our way to a new headquarters. We leave this place to the French.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Put".



# 12

ENGLAND

26 August 1944

Dear Folks:

For the past two and a half weeks, with the exception of a two-day trip to the "far shore," I've been back in England. And it is good to be here again, after a bit more than a month in France . . . even though our stay here may be a short one. I came back to take on a new assignment . . . but, I'm getting ahead of my story. Let's go back to where I left off when I last wrote.

In that letter, I told you of watching the action on the opening day of the big push near St. Lo. I didn't tell you the whole story . . . but some of my eagle-eyed friends spotted a story of that day in the *New York Times* and have connected my presence with the action of that story.

I did tell you that I was with a party of nine American Generals. But I didn't tell you that some bombs fell unpleasantly close to us. I felt then that the story was not permissible under censorship rules. Now that the *Times* has told the story I can tell my slant on it.

As we watched the action, one of the large groups of "heavies" flew over. They were bombing the St. Lo-Periers road, one or two miles up ahead. Through some miscalculation this group dropped their bombs too early . . . our warning was a roaring sound from above. Those who had heard such sounds before, hit the ground . . . and you can believe that I was not the last one down.

The noise grew louder . . . it seemed as though ages passed . . . I kept thinking, "God, I wish they'd land, somewhere." Finally they did land . . . some hundreds of yards to our right . . . there were hundreds of explosions and great columns of black smoke rose skyward. We picked ourselves up, brushed off our clothes and laughed, jerkily, with comments that "those were too close for comfort."

Scared? You bet your life I was. The only reason I wasn't scared worse was that it all happened so quickly one didn't have time to work up fear. But I wasn't alone in my reactions. It would have made a great picture, had there been a photographer present with sufficient presence of mind and courage to have snapped our predicament . . . Lieutenant Generals, Major Generals, Brigadier Generals, and lesser lights crawling out from under rose bushes and out of ditches.

There's a strong human instinct, in such situations, to run for the nearest cover . . . whatever that cover may be. In this case there were no foxholes or slit trenches at hand. So, instinctively, we threw ourselves under the nearest bushes (which happened to be rose bushes) alongside a flimsy wire fence. Obviously such cover was no protection whatsoever. But, like the ostrich, we felt better to be under these bushes, even if they didn't mean a thing.

Such accidents do happen. In fact it is taken as part of any plan for heavy artillery or aerial bombardment that some shells or bombs will go astray and some lives will be lost. It was in this area that Lieutenant General McNair was killed . . . also the war corre-

spondent, Bede Irvin, whom I mentioned in my last letter. War is a cold-blooded business. And the many lives saved our infantry and armor, by the softening up of the enemy with such bombardment, far outweigh the few lives lost through such errors. That is the whole story.

The day I mailed my last letter, August 5th, we moved our HQ . . . leaving the Channel fishing village for a spot much nearer the front. Picking up all our equipment, loading it on trucks, we started out . . . in intermittent caravans. I really hated to leave, for this had been a very pleasant spot.

I didn't leave the old HQ until everything was cleaned out . . . as a result, when I arrived at our new camp things were in pretty good shape. We set up "housekeeping" in a forest, everything under canvas. And I found a small, individual tent ready for me (no, not a pup tent . . . a small wall tent). So I threw in my bedding roll, on the canvas Army cot, dropped my bags, and was "at home."

This was a new experience for me. For, though my Army service is running close onto four years (World Wars I and II), this was the first time I had actually lived in an Army tent. Many months have I lived in rough barracks and tar paper shacks, but never before in a tent.

The weather was fine . . . even if it did get cold at night and the mornings were chilly, damp, and raw. I climbed into my bedding roll, with plenty of blankets, and slept the sleep of a baby.

The cold, raw mornings came too soon. One didn't dally over climbing into clothes . . . even though they were damp and clammy. Over to a nearby lister bag for a tin hat half full of cold water . . . and shaving, washing, and teeth brushing were all managed from this combination helmet and lavatory. The trickiest task of all was trying to shave with one of those natty little steel mirrors which look so cute and are part of every kit folks send to their boys in service. First, there's no satisfactory place to hang the thing so you can see your mug. Being concave on one side and convex on the other, you see yourself either too big or too little . . . it is like those laughing galleries at Coney Island where the goofy mirrors distort you into



all sorts of queer shapes. But it works . . . and that is all that is necessary. As for baths . . . well, I stayed there only ten days and we had not gotten around to fixing up bathing facilities. So baths didn't bother us at all.

The first morning in camp I was puzzled to see a half-dozen French peasants come walking across our HQ area. They were dressed in the usual garb . . . one or two in too-small, business-type suits, others in faded denim jumper suits, several in blue berets, all with light French shoes and no socks. I wondered, "What are they doing here? Are we employing peasant labor?"

Just then one of our Colonels passed and called out to them, "Good morning. How did you sleep?" To my surprise several answered, "Okeh." So I inquired, "Who the so-and-so are those fellows?" I learned they were some of our fliers who had been shot down behind the German lines, had hidden out with the French for some six weeks and had just made our camp the night before. One of them was a flying Colonel. I tried to get a picture of them . . . they were the most perfect bunch of "French peasants" I ever expect to see. But I couldn't find anyone with an official camera . . . and shortly after breakfast the "peasants" climbed into a truck and headed back for our bases in the U.K.

That same afternoon we drove over to the coast, checking up on some billets. After driving some miles, we got beyond the areas where the heavy fighting had taken place. Here nothing had been damaged . . . except where an occasional stray bomb had landed through mischance. Houses were intact. This part of France is lovely . . . winding roads, lined with trees and bushes . . . fields green and luxuriant . . . fat cattle in great numbers . . . crops hurrying along to harvest.

Everyone waved at us as we drove along . . . little tots, kids, boys and girls, young men and women, matrons, even old ladies in black dresses and white lace caps . . . all out promenading, for it was Sunday afternoon. They smiled and made the V sign, called "Allo" or "*Bon Jour*." These people have been little touched by the War . . . they have not known the destruction of their fellow countrymen only a few

miles away. They show it in their friendliness . . . in their happiness over deliverance which didn't cost them much loss or suffering.

Yet the Germans left their mark even here in this peaceful country. The French told us of the owner of one of the billets we were interested in . . . a wealthy Parisian of sixty-five years or so. When the Heinies came they demanded his villa. He refused. They carted him away to a prison camp and there badgered him, trying to make him give up his keys and give them possession. He steadfastly refused. Finally they horsewhipped him. The old man died of shock or a heart attack.

The days passed pleasantly enough . . . most of the time we kept busy . . . news of our rapid gains up ahead kept us on our toes. Only once did we have anything like real excitement. That was when the Jerries made their armored counterattack toward Avranches, not so far away, in an attempt to cut off our forces which had pushed down into the Brest peninsula. One can't tell where armor may end up if it once succeeds in making a break-through. But our forces stopped their drive the second day, after but a few miles of progress. And life went on in its usual way.

I had become well acquainted with some of our prisoner of war interrogators and it was interesting to listen to stories of prisoners who came through our headquarters. One story in particular amused me . . . it may give you a grin.

They brought in a German flier who had been shot down . . . a Major of the upper crust, arrogant and cocky. He refused to answer any questions. So, finally, they told him, "Okeh, you need not talk. We know plenty about you anyhow. You are from such and such an outfit, your home is in such and such a town, you are so old, you are married, have no children. Also, you have a 'sweetie' and we have the thirty-five letters from her which you carried on your person." (This information came from the personal papers the Major had on him . . . apparently he carried his "sweetie's" letters on his flights, so they wouldn't be sent home with his personal effects in case he was killed or captured.)

"Now as to those letters," the interrogator continued, "of course you know we shall have to send these back to your wife."

The Heinie jumped to his feet, yelling, "*Nein, nein* . . . you can't do this to me! !"

Then his tongue loosened. He talked. And for each bit of information he gave they returned to him *one* of his "sweetie's" letters. For one especially good bit of information they gave him *two* letters. Thus, letter by letter, they sold him his thirty-five letters for the information they wanted.

One day we drove cross country to St. Lo. Here is the most absolute destruction I have yet seen. This town, which formerly must have had a population of 35,000 to 50,000, is literally blown to bits. Every house, church, place of business, and railroad station is flat to the ground or has only a skeleton of walls standing. Not a roof is intact . . . not a window remains. A fine white dust, from the broken stones of the buildings, covers everything, as though a terrific dust storm had just passed. A two-story building, formerly a movie house, has its entire side torn away . . . the balcony seats hang crazily down to the first floor.

We drove around the town. No one seems to live there now. We saw not more than twenty civilians throughout the entire town area. It seemed as though this city could never be rebuilt . . . as though it would be easier to pick another site and start a new city. But I'll wager that by this time the French are back, gathering up the rubble, starting over again. The homing instinct is a powerful driving force.

Then we drove up along the St. Lo-Periers road . . . the line from which our troops jumped off on this last big push . . . the area most heavily bombed on that D-Day. In field after field, as we drove along, we could see bomb craters . . . thousands of them. Not deep ones . . . we used only light bombs to avoid making craters, intended only to kill or shock the enemy, yet leave the terrain in good shape for our advancing tanks and troops. There seemed to be a pattern of bomb holes . . . bombs seemed to have hit almost every fifty yards. What a hell that must have been for the enemy.

As we drove, horrible stenchs pestered our nostrils . . . dead cattle in nearby fields . . . there must be hundreds of them along that road . . . still unburied, and after ten to twelve days they really decompose. It is the odor of battlefields. I wondered why, in their own health interests, the French peasants had not buried them. The only answer I could imagine is that the French have learned that if they wait long enough, we (rich old Uncle Santa Claus Sam) will pay them to dig graves and cover them over.

Of course not all the cattle were killed. As I've said before, one sees many fine cattle in the fields of Normandy and in Brittany where I have been.

I've been somewhat brought to task for saying that . . . and for saying that the French in these parts have plenty of food and are well fed. I've had letters implying that I misrepresented the true state of "poor France." I don't know what may be true in Paris or Eastern France. But I do know that what I have said is true. Nor am I trying to belittle the suffering France has endured. And I don't think I am "anti-French."

I am reminded . . . I've had other letters implying that I have told unfair stories about the British. I am accused of being "anti-British."

I haven't said anything about the Poles, so no one has told me I am a "Polophobe" . . . if that's a word. But then I haven't been in Poland . . . not yet.

Nor has anyone criticized me for saying that conditions in Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Iran, or Saudi Arabia leave much to be desired. Apparently these peoples do not have many boosters in America.

It all makes me wonder where this great American pastime . . . this wanting Uncle Sam to "help out" some favored country or people . . . is taking us. So many Americans are so sure "we owe" this or that to some other country, depending on where their personal interests lie.

And there is so much propaganda trying to sell us on doing this or that for some other country.

A short time ago I saw a movie in London . . . the first one I've seen in a long time. It was "The White Cliffs of Dover," an American film, I believe . . . a good picture from a movie standpoint.

The theme was that we Americans are really a part of England and English history . . . there was much reference to "this colony which had broken away," "Our Mother Country" . . . and the obvious conclusion was that America "owes" it to "The Mother Country" to help her in her wars and her troubles, as we have done in this and the last war. (Ignoring completely the fact that many of our people are NOT of English extraction . . . that many who did come from England, did so to escape persecution . . . that New York was New Amsterdam before it became New York.)

In short, it was *propaganda* of the most insidious type. I don't know who sponsored it . . . nor who *paid* for it. But it seemed obvious there was an ulterior purpose behind it.

On the other hand . . . I rarely hear anyone shouting about America's interests or what anyone may "owe" America . . . no one asking, when it is proposed that we do so and so for some foreign country, "What will this do to the U.S.A.?" or "Is it to America's interest?" In fact, it seems we have gotten to a point where if anyone dares ask such questions, he is hissed down and accused of being one of those "dirty America-Firsters"! Can you believe it? . . . "America First" has become an epithet *in America!* ! ! . . . and there is no distinguishing between people who may have identified themselves with "America First" for subversive reasons and those who genuinely want America to be considered first.

When will we Americans learn to fight first for America? . . . as an Englishman, like Churchill, fights first for England . . . DeGaulle fights first for France . . . Chiang Kai-shek fights first for China.

I hope we learn before we pull the U.S.A. down to ruin by playing Santa Claus to the whole world.

And, speaking of "helping out the Mother Country" . . . if that is a good theme . . . suppose that Eisenhower, Spaatz, Nimitz, Stratemeyer, Air Ace Gentile, and a host of others descended from Axis countries, decided to "fight for the Mother Country." What would

happen to this War? What would be the result for England, France, China, et al.?

I hope you'll forgive me that "blow-off" . . . I just had to get it off my chest. I've been irked so long and so often by this pseudo-Americanism that puts every other country's interests ahead of our own. I owe too much to America to sit by without piping up . . . even if mine is but a "small voice crying out in the wilderness."

On August 10th, I came back here to a new assignment. General Royce had just been made Commanding General of all U.S. tactical Air Force units in this area and also Deputy Air C. in C. of A.E.A.F. . . . that means Allied Expeditionary Air Force and includes all British and U.S. tactical air forces in this area. I am working directly with him as a sort of deputy. It is most interesting, for of course we see what makes this war "tick" from day to day . . . especially from the air standpoint, and that ties in directly with what the ground forces are doing.

The weather, both here and in France, has been well-nigh perfect for the past three weeks or more . . . except for a few days recently which have been foggy, rainy, chilly. (Several of these days we had a fire in the fireplace in the office . . . imagine that in late August!) These weeks of good weather have been a Godsend to our forces. It helped tremendously in the magnificent sweep through the Brest Peninsula, then east to the gates of Paris and across the Seine. But I won't try to tell of that . . . you know all about it from your newspapers.

Many of these days have been like Indian Summer at home. Leaves are turning brown . . . there's almost a carpet of them in Hyde Park, London. Perhaps the buzz bombs and anti-aircraft have hastened their falling this year.

Yes, the buzz bombs still come over. But their numbers have been greatly reduced by defensive measures of anti-aircraft artillery, fighter planes, and barrage balloons protecting the London area.

Last Friday we flew down to the southeast coast to see the anti-aircraft and fighters in action. First we landed at an R.A.F. airdrome

on the coast. This is one of the fields to which planes return when they have been damaged by enemy action across the Channel. One B-26 had just come in. Its left horizontal tail surfaces had been half shot off . . . the rudder was badly riddled with one-third of it gone. Yet the pilot had made a perfect landing . . . none of the crew had been injured. I'll gamble however that the tail gunner had not had a happy time, with flak smashing his ship a few feet from his head.

We talked with the pilot . . . a fine looking American boy of perhaps twenty-three. He was snappy, alert . . . apparently none the worse for his experience, either mentally or physically. These boys can sure take it, as well as dish it out.

Taking off again we flew on east . . . past Brighton, Folkestone, up along the "White Cliffs of Dover." Across the Channel, which is only some 20 miles wide here, the "White Cliffs of France" stood out prominently, as white as those of Dover. Offshore a naval vessel laid down a great smoke screen, shutting off the Germans' view of what was taking place on the English side . . . a convoy was passing. I was amazed to see how completely this curtain of smoke, but little affected by a light breeze, blotted out all that was beyond.

We landed near a coast city, were met by the Colonel in command of our Anti-Aircraft Artillery, taken to his quarters for dinner. After dinner we drove out to visit one of our batteries . . . a British Major General, in command of all British Anti-Aircraft, with us.

All along this coast there are batteries of anti-aircraft guns . . . U.S. and British. And this battery of ours was a complete setup of guns, radar, and all the paraphernalia of aircraft detection, communications. Our boys were well dug in. What might appear to be only a mound would turn out to be a completely hidden dugout with equipment, bunks, men.

We stayed there until dark. But the Heinie was not active. Not a single buzz bomb came over. So we returned to our billets and went to bed on Army cots, with our blankets wrapped around us.

At 3:00 a. m. there was an air alarm . . . sirens which seemed just outside our windows wailed loudly, their weird, up-and-down



cries sending a few chills up your spine as you roused from sleep and realized "this is it."

We pulled on a few clothes, climbed several flights of stairs, clambered up over some precariously balanced boards through a man-hole to the roof to watch the "show."

Nor had we long to wait. Already there was distant firing, down the coast. Then two lights appeared in the black night, coming toward us from the southeast. One was extremely low . . . so low it seemed impossible for it to clear the houses of the town, set high on the cliffs.

Batteries broke out all around us . . . out over the Channel we could hear the engines of our night fighters, hunting these bombs, but the two had broken through. The pulsating, heavy sound came nearer . . . a cross between that of rushing gas from a constricting pipe and the throb of engines. The racket of the guns was terrific. Red-yellowish bursts of flak . . . bursts of red climbing up like a beaded chain . . . the former from the heavier caliber guns, the latter from the lighter, rapid fire ones.

It is strange to watch the firing at a distance. You see the bursts but there is no sound at first . . . then, many seconds later, you hear the boom.

Bursts came closer and closer to the bombs . . . some seemed to bounce off the bomb's steel shell with a spray of fire. Suddenly one of the bombs burst in midair, with a brilliant, blood-red explosion. The other flew low over the town, on toward London, to have its pursuit taken up by the night fighters waiting just beyond the range of fire of the ack-ack. More lights appeared southwest of us . . . more heavy firing . . . more explosions in midair. To the northwest we saw several bomb lights go out, indicating they had been hit by the fighters . . . some time later we heard the heavy boom as they exploded on striking the ground.

More bombs came over . . . more heavy firing . . . more great bursts as the buzz bombs exploded in the air.

Finally the show was over. No more bombs came over. We climbed down through the manhole and returned to our bunks.

But our sleep was not long. At five o'clock a. m. we were awakened; we dressed hurriedly and went downstairs to the mess for a cup of coffee. Then we drove southwest along the coast to another U.S. battery . . . it was just beginning to get light.

As we approached the battery there was scarcely a soul in sight. But the guard called the C.O., and soon the place was full of Americans . . . above ground and in the dugouts.

At 6:45 a. m. a siren sounded. Cries from the men, "Let's go" . . . crews ran out from dugouts to man the guns. The guns barked, long before we saw any target . . . radar had located it faster than our eyes could. I jumped at the first blast for it was unexpected at that instant . . . and these were heavy caliber guns. The target was still well over a mile out over the Channel. Great clouds of acrid gray smoke rose up over the gun positions . . . we moved back a bit and to windward to get a better view. Hundreds of black bursts of flak appeared in the sky where red bursts had marked the explosions of the ack-ack . . . the chains of red beads rose up from the lighter guns, bending into an arc as the gunners followed the target.

Occasionally pieces of flak fell near us, with a "whoosh" reminiscent of heavy artillery shells going overhead . . . an excellent time for tin hats. The buzz bombs were plainly visible by this time, several of them . . . batteries on our left and right were all busy. The bursts seemed to be all about the targets, some seemed to bounce off them. Suddenly a blinding flash in the sky . . . a bomb had been hit and it exploded in air. The bombs continued to come over and the heavy firing was continuous. More targets were hit, exploding in air. One bomb got through the heavy barrage without being hit . . . almost miraculous, it seemed, that anything could get through. Immediately it was beyond the range of the guns, fighters . . . lurking, high up, behind us constantly . . . swooped down to engage it. The fighters seemed to dive right through the flak . . . but that was an optical illusion, the flak bursts were between us and the fighters. A fighter

following close on the target, swung away . . . the bomb nosed over . . . a column of black smoke rose where the bomb struck the ground. A short time later we heard the explosion. Another bomb got through the barrage . . . again the fighters engaged it . . . soon it nosed down to its destruction.

The morning show was over. In our area, seven bombs had come over . . . perhaps others had been shot down by fighters out over the Channel before getting to us. Five of the seven were destroyed by the ack-ack fire . . . the other two were downed by the fighters. A magnificent show . . . a perfect score.

We returned to our billets for breakfast at 7:30 a. m. . . . the show had lasted only some twenty minutes. At 8:45 a. m. we took off for home. Coming back we flew southeast of London, where the barrage balloons are placed to knock down bombs that get by both ack-ack and fighters. Hundreds and hundreds of these "rubber cows" ride their anchoring lines, the morning sun shining on their silvered sides. They are thickly set together and extend for miles and miles . . . almost endless they seem . . . actually they number in the thousands. And they have proved quite effective. They account for a fair share of the "kills."

Thus London is being spared the heavy attacks it would otherwise get. Even less frequently do bombs get through to where we are. But they do make it occasionally. And a few nights ago they put on an extra show . . . seemingly for our benefit. It was a dirty, foggy night. Bombs came over in early evening . . . again at 3:00 a. m. . . . finally, a morning show at 7:00 o'clock. None landed really close, but quite a few were near enough to shake the house and make windows and doors rattle. That happens even when they drop a mile or more away. It seemed this night, in view of the Heinies' increasingly serious situation in France, as though they were having a clearing out of their bomb stock . . . they seemed to plan on going out of business.

Now for several nights no bombs have landed anywhere near us . . . we've heard nothing of them. Maybe the Heinies actually are going out of the buzz bomb business.

So life goes at this HQ. The place frequently gets overrun with "brass hats." Lieutenant General Spaatz visits us often . . . likewise Lieutenant General "Jimmy" Doolittle, Lieutenant General Brereton, Air Chief Marshal Leigh-Mallory, Air Chief Marshal Harris . . . and flocks of lesser lights.

We look forward to a move soon . . . to France, of course. The War goes so well it may be Paris. I hope so.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "P. H. R.", likely representing Paul H. R. (Paul H. R.).



# 13

## PARIS

26 September 1944

Dear Folks:

This past month has certainly been one of action . . . of fast movement for our troops . . . sweeping into Paris and beyond, into Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg, at points through the Siegfried Line into Germany itself . . . while from the south our troops pushed up rapidly to take part in the attack on Germany. It has been amazing . . . showing the Heinies that their fast pushes of 1939-1940, against unprepared peoples, were second-class "shows" compared to what we do when we get going.

And this month has been one of movement for us personally. In fact, I've practically "commuted" between England and France for these four weeks. We've moved our HQ twice. In addition, I've had special jobs that took me back and forth.

But with it all we have managed to see some exciting things and visit some interesting places.

One day in France we visited Mont St. Michel . . . a huge rock that juts out of the coastal plain (in fact, out of the waters of high tide) at the base of the Normandy peninsula . . . a great cathedral on its top and a small village clinging precariously to its rocky sides. It rises several hundred feet . . . a strange ancient citadel. Another day we flew over to see St. Malo . . . famous French seaside resort of peace times . . . where the "Crazy Colonel" of the Heinies held out for days and weeks, after all hope was gone and all the rest of the Germans had surrendered. He was in a fortress out on one of the points. But he finally surrendered too . . . after making many brave speeches to the effect that "a German officer never surrenders."

A few days later, we were back in England and took time out to visit the dog races and Madame Tussaud's famous "Wax Works."

Yes, they have dog races in England, and horse races as well, even in these War times. I was glad to visit White City, the dog track, for I had never seen dog races before. It is right in London . . . the track is enclosed like one of our big football or baseball stadiums.

We were guests of the owner of the track, so we got an excellent table in the de luxe restaurant . . . a glassed in, tiered dining room that looks directly down upon the track from the best point of vantage . . . nearby tables do not obstruct your vision as they are much lower or to one side.

We sat in perfect comfort, though it was a rainy evening, and had a good dinner, taking time out to place our bets at the betting booths directly behind us, or to collect our winnings. (Believe it or not, we did win.) Naturally everything else stopped when the mechanical rabbit started its preliminary run around the field, indicating that the race was about to start. And the races were genuinely exciting.

I was particularly impressed with this ring-side restaurant where, in perfect comfort, one can watch the races run before you. That's my idea of the way to go to races. If they had such arrangements in

the U.S.A. I might even get to be a horse race fan . . . who knows? (Yes, I know we have restaurants at some tracks in the U.S., but I've never seen anything as convenient and comfortable as this . . . and I've seen such places as Belmont, Churchill Downs, Arlington.)

The stadium was jammed . . . 25,000 to 45,000 people I judged. The English apparently go for dog races. They seem to be great gamblers, too. That British reserve drops when the dogs come out of their cages.

Another afternoon when we were in London we took a half-hour to drop in at Madame Tussaud's "Wax Museum."

As you step inside there's a woman seated at a desk. You start toward her to get tickets . . . then you notice, she's wax! A guard on the stairway points the way . . . he's wax, too. Already you feel a bit creepy for you were sure these were people. Now you wonder what is "people" and what is wax.

You climb several flights of stairs and enter a large hall. On all sides are groups of people . . . the British Royal Family, Historic Ministers, outstanding figures of the present British Government, American Presidents and Statesmen, record makers of sports, aviation, auto racing, celebrities of stage and screen, ancient kings. You become conscious of a strange atmosphere . . . a subdued hush, as when one enters a cathedral. People talk in low voices. You find that you too are talking in near-whispers. Why? You seem to be in the presence of all of these people . . . of the present, and of ages long past. You speak low lest these people overhear what you say . . . you are a bit embarrassed in commenting about them.

These "people" are startlingly life-like . . . they must be about to speak . . . especially their eyes have an "aliveness" that is disturbing. The hair of both men and women has an authenticity that must come from genuine human hair. Churchill has a fuzz on his bald head that is thoroughly realistic, though the likeness to the Prime Minister is not too good. Other figures, while surprisingly "alive," are none too good reproductions of the real persons . . . this is especially true of King Peter, Gene Tunney, Lindbergh, Wally and Eddy and others.



On a cushioned bench in the middle of the room there is an old lady, resting . . . her head bent slightly forward in weariness. But you look again . . . she too is just wax . . . again you have been fooled.

So you wander from floor to floor. Last of all you visit the "Chamber of Horrors" in the basement . . . wax figures portray ancient tortures, beheadings, murders.

It is an interesting experience, for once. I don't think I'd care to make a hobby of regular visits.

On September 6th I left England and flew to Paris . . . to locate a house for General Royce and a few of the rest of us, so that when our HQ moved forward we would have a place to stay in or near Paris . . . though our HQ would not be in the city.

Colonel Fowler of our U.S. London Embassy went with me . . . and we also took along Mr. Wood, who was returning to Paris to reopen our Embassy. He had stayed in Paris during the German occupation of 1940 and up to the time that the U.S. actually declared War.

We landed at one of the famous airports . . . badly damaged by our bombs, but now being repaired. Drove of our air transports were already coming in, bringing supplies and personnel. Paris had been liberated only ten days before . . . for though the Maquis had come in on August 23rd there had been much back-and-forth fighting up until August 27th.

As we flew in, we could see the heavily damaged railroad yards, industrial plants such as the aircraft factories converted over from the auto plants of Renault and Citroen, and the airfields pitted with bomb craters, hangars and administration buildings in ruins. Here again is eloquent evidence of the effectiveness of air power. The factories are gutted . . . railroad yards are shambles of burned cars, wrecked locomotives, and twisted steel rails.

The bridges in Paris proper are all intact . . . we made no effort to destroy them. But we did ruin every bridge across the Seine beyond the Paris limits . . . that was enough to disrupt German transport completely without subjecting Paris to unnecessary loss of life and destruction.

A command car met us, having been sent on ahead. Driving downtown, one's first impression was of bicycles, bicycles, bicycles . . . almost no civilian cars or trucks, except a few of those charcoal burners with their huge cylinders, to make the gas, on front or rear . . . the streets heavy with U. S. Army trucks and cars hurrying along. The Americans have taken over. Some French cars, of fairly ancient vintage, bearing the letters "F.F.I." (French Forces of the Interior) carried French Officers in a wide variety of uniforms.

Already the German signs and posters had disappeared from walls and fences . . . you could see where they had been torn away. In their stead brilliant posters of red, white, and blue displayed a triumphant figure of "LIBERATION."

Down to the center of town . . . through the Place de l'Opera . . . down the Rue de la Paix to Place Vendome . . . to the Ritz Hotel. Here we put up . . . in real luxury except that there was no warm water and no heat . . . the nights and mornings were raw and chilly.

Three busy days followed, our Base Command was swamped, preparing HQ's and billets . . . likewise the French were in an uproar getting their Government offices set up. So we got no help in locating a proper billet for the General . . . we were on our own.

Colonel Fowler is an old-time member of the Travelers Club, an international club on the Champs Elysees. So we went there . . . met old friends of his and quizzed them as to where we might find a suitable house.

Downtown Paris bears little evidence of War . . . either of German occupation or of the fighting that took place in the streets . . . except for numerous wrecked German tanks, burned trucks and cars . . . numerous marks of light caliber bullets on the buildings and an occasional smashed column that must have been hit by fairly heavy caliber fire. The populace, plus American G.I.'s, swarmed over the tanks, climbed into them, examined their apparatus.

Bicycles, bicycles, everywhere . . . all along the Champs Elysees from Place de la Concorde, to the Arc de Triomphe and in all the streets. Everyone, so it seemed, rode a bicycle or walked . . . the Metro (subway) was out of order. But bicycle taxis did a brisk

business . . . little two-wheeled buggies hooked on behind a bike, with the rider pedaling furiously, a curious variation of ricksha. Carts hooked behind bicycles carried parcels and bundles . . . bicycle trucks. Horse-drawn wagons . . . crowded with men and women standing, packed like a New York subway in rush hours . . . carried civilians to and from work. Occasionally two or three bike riders, with ropes over their shoulders, pulled a heavy cart of freight.

The people appeared well dressed, healthy . . . no evidence of starvation, even though one did not see many fat people. The women and girls made a sharp contrast with London. Here they are chic, as Parisiennes have always been. I don't know how much quality there may be in the materials, but they certainly know how to make the best of what they wear. And they seem blessed with a degree of good looks that shows off their clothes to good advantage. The current hair dress is "something" . . . a fantastic pompadour that piles high on the front of the head to a height of as much as 4 to 5 inches. Few wear hats . . . many sport colorful turbans.

All Paris seemed to be on the go . . . a holiday mood . . . Paris was still celebrating "La Liberation."

In the late afternoon the Ritz bar . . . famous for years, and with Frank, the American bartender, still on the job . . . was like an Elks Convention. Everyone tried to crowd in. By 7:00 o'clock there wasn't a seat available . . . the bar was four to five deep. Champagne and brandy flowed as in days of old . . . at a new high price. A small glass of champagne, 75 francs (\$1.50) . . . brandy almost as much.

Everyone seemed to be there. I ran into Demaree Bess (*Saturday Evening Post*). Young Bill Hearst and Col. Elliott Roosevelt were at the next table . . . amusing to see these two sons of bitter political enemies on such friendly terms. (Could it happen to anyone but Americans?) Ernest Hemingway came in . . . without his beard. He's a big fellow . . . reminded me of King Farouk's shaving of his full beard . . . Lady Queensbury in the uniform of an American War Correspondent . . . they say she paints portraits of American Generals . . . but why, I wouldn't know. Everyone talks with everyone else. Like an old-time reunion.

We had dinner in the main dining room. Food was a bit difficult and none too good (coffee was atrocious . . . I don't think there were any coffee beans involved in its brewing). Colonel Fowler and I decided to splurge. So we told Michel, the head waiter, to give us the "works," with a bottle of Pommery 1928 and the trimmings. We got "the works" . . . and a check for the two of us, totaling 1,780 francs . . . at two cents per franc.

One evening we went with a party to see a night club, just reopened now that the Heinies were gone. It is an old-time place . . . called Place Pigalle . . . has been run for years by an American. The place was jammed . . . another Elks Convention. Colonel Fowler and I decided to walk home. The streets were black . . . not a light anywhere. It wasn't very far, but we didn't know the way too well, so we stumbled along. Twice shots rang out in nearby streets. There has been a lot of sniping at night. The French say there are at least 10,000 Heinies still hiding out in and around Paris . . . but that may be all conversation, at least as to that number. The F.F.I. works on them . . . someone gets shot almost every night. Demaree Bess gave me an interesting opinion on the shooting when General DeGaulle first came to Paris . . . the shooting in the streets and in Notre Dame Cathedral. Bess was in the Cathedral when the shooting took place and he also witnessed the street fighting. He is convinced that much of the shooting was the result of overzealous, highly imaginative, itchy-trigger-fingered F.F.I. He doesn't think there were any Germans in Notre Dame who did any of that shooting. Probably there were German snipers firing into the streets. Obviously it is difficult to judge just what the whole story was . . . naturally there has been a tenseness, which easily broke out in shooting.

The question of whether Paris really suffered from lack of food, during German occupation, is always good for an argument. We have met and talked at length with a good many very fine Parisians, and I've heard a wide variety of stories. They invariably tell you that it was pretty rough . . . that food was very hard to get . . . that the Germans were insolent . . . that they (the French) had practically nothing to do with them socially . . . that they (the French) stayed

away from hotels and other places where the Germans went, or ignored the Germans when they did go. If you quiz them about actual hunger or starvation, their answers get more vague . . . they speak of being unable to get this or that food, usually something like steak or other half-way delicacy. If you ask them about the poor people, they indicate that it was very tough . . . usually cite instances where some poor folks had to use up their savings, or sell their belongings to get enough to live on . . . coupled with this, they emphasize how expensive food became. But I have yet to hear any claims that people actually starved. I think it goes without saying that many of the people did "scrape along" on slim rations. I believe it is also true that the well-to-do people ate pretty well, though it hit their pocketbooks rather hard.

Invariably these Parisians want to talk about the fear of the Gestapo that kept them in jitters all the time . . . of frequent calls from the Gestapo agents . . . of people (often the ones you are talking to) who were thrown into concentration camps, or who kept in hiding for months at a time . . . of people who were tortured by the Gestapo or who just disappeared. One Britisher I've met walks painfully, apparently he is badly crippled . . . he tells of being tortured, burned about the legs, in a concentration camp at Grenoble. I've checked his story with others and it seems authentic. Other people I've met . . . some of them American citizens who had been living in France before the War . . . had escaped from prison camps but a few days or a few weeks before.

There is no question in my mind but what it was grim, for everyone here.

I've driven outside Paris quite a little, however, and within a few miles of the city one sees many hundreds of fine, fat cattle, geese, chickens, pigs, good crops in the fields. Of course the Germans must have taken much of this while they were here. An even greater problem, apparently, was the fact that Parisians had no means of bringing in food from the country . . . no transportation.

So it is my opinion that the truth is somewhat less terrible than the stories we read in our papers. Unquestionably it was a trying ordeal for all of the French . . . except for the Collaborators, of whom

I fear there were more than one cares to admit. I believe the Germans held themselves pretty much in restraint because they recognized their inability to cope with the situation if they oppressed the French too far, thus forcing them to open rebellion as their only alternative to starvation or death from torture. And as to the French Collaborators . . . well, I wonder what most of us would do in the situation the French found themselves in. Certainly during most of these years there seemed slim hope that liberation would ever come. What could a manufacturer do if the Germans demanded his plant and, with pistol at back of his neck, insisted that he run the plant and turn out products for the German Army? He had his choice (a) probable torture or death (b) to pretend to work with them and do as little as possible, meanwhile trying to work with the "underground," or (c) all-out collaboration.

I suspect that there were some Frenchmen who chose each of the three courses. And, as far as I can see, today it is almost impossible to draw a hard line of demarcation between those who chose (b) and (c).

Today it seems that a certain degree of chaos is unavoidable because of this fact. It is easy for undesirables, actual collaborators or even actual criminals, to claim they are loyal French . . . and, under this cloak, wreak a vengeance on someone else against whom they have a grudge. How can an honest Frenchman defend himself against charges? . . . for things that happened when no one could trust another . . . when everyone's activities must of necessity have been shrouded in secrecy?

Along with all this, comes a certain frenzy, born of a desire for revenge against someone . . . the Germans are gone . . . so one outlet is to wreak vengeance against anyone who seems a likely suspect. It reminds me of the days of the French Revolution when many, many honest Frenchmen went to the guillotine to satisfy the blood-thirsty mob. I have reasons to believe that many Frenchmen are having sleepless nights . . . many of whom are perfectly innocent of any

crime against France . . . for fear they may fall afoul of this type of mob vengeance.

All told, it isn't a very pretty picture . . . in spite of the atmosphere of gayety that prevails in Paris and in the Provinces. I am very much afraid that France will suffer greatly before she again regains her equilibrium and her strength as a nation. Moreover . . . so it seems to me . . . France must again learn to go back to work. The five-day week still dominates their thinking . . . they still think that Uncle Sam, or someone from the "outside," must see to it that their enemies are kept in leash and that France be provided with the things she needs. To my simple mind, until they . . . and the rest of Europe . . . learn that the first, and most important, step in this direction is to *go to work themselves* . . . well, I fear Europe will continue to be in serious trouble. If they don't learn this I doubt if it will take another twenty years for another war to develop . . . it could happen in another ten.

But let's forget that pessimistic discourse on economics and politics.

Our hunt for a house went on. Our friends at the Travelers Club gave us leads . . . many of which proved duds. They mentioned Cole Porter's house . . . it was occupied by a kids school, and the furniture was gone. Another proved to be the house General Pershing had used during World War No. 1. It was much too big, and also unfurnished. A house of the Rothschilds was locked tight and we could not locate the caretaker.

Finally I got a lead that was interesting. A fine old French home, almost beneath the shadow of the Eiffel Tower. High iron fence in front, a courtyard . . . lovely gardens in the rear, great trees, overlooking the Seine. Two large salons, a smaller library, a dining room that easily seats fifteen to twenty and could handle twice that number, ten large bedrooms, four bathrooms (that's a lot for an old French mansion) . . . plus garages, house for the concierge, plenty of room for the servants . . . and six old-time servants still on the job after years. The place is fabulously furnished. Silk, oriental rugs, rich tapestries, priceless paintings, bric-a-brac and *objets d'art* from all over the world. Fine china and heavy silverware.



I learned that the place is owned by a very wealthy American . . . a man in his eighties . . . who has lived in England during the War years, while the house was occupied by a German General. Incidentally, that's one good reason why the house was in such good shape . . . water running, electricity working. Most of Paris was without electricity at this time. So I got the address of the owner in England. My job in Paris was done, for the time being.

Early the next morning I left in the command car. Out through Versailles . . . on west for more than 200 miles to where our HQ was at that time. It was a perfect morning . . . bright and snappy . . . the countryside was beautiful, excellent crops in the fields, many fine cattle, pigs, geese, chickens. There was little evidence of the War that had just passed through this land, except for many broken, burned German tanks, trucks, cars which lined the highways. This, for the most part, was the country over which the Germans had hurried in near-rout. Farther west, of course, we came upon villages where real fighting had taken place and where destruction was appalling. But these rural areas are still in good shape . . . the people seem to have had plenty to eat. At one place I actually saw a French lad holding out a small basket of eggs, for sale.

The following day I was off for England, by plane. Another plane ride in England took me to the seashore resort hotel where my prospective landlord lived. He is a charming, dignified old gentleman of the old school. After twenty minutes, having told him of my visit to his house and of our desire to use the place for the General, I had his letter authorizing us to take over the place *for free*, and the six servants were thrown in on the deal!!! Can you beat that? I am now claiming top honors as *Champion International Scrounger* of the Allied Forces.

Within a few days I returned to France . . . our HQ moved up from the rear. So now we are again settled. And opportunity frequently makes it possible for us to enjoy our Paris home. We are making the most of it.

One day last week we flew up to Verdun . . . over Chateau Thierry, past Chalons . . . scenes of much of World War No. 1 heavy

fighting. Here the country is open . . . there are practically none of the hedgerows as we knew them in Normandy. The fields are cultivated in relatively small parcels, with few fences of any kind. From the air the country looked rich and well cultivated.

Landing at Verdun we noted again the many cattle in the fields, the chickens, pigs, geese. This eastern part of France, like western France's rural areas, seems to be in good shape. Nor is there much evidence of war's destruction . . . the Heinies got out too fast.

Our business completed, we drove out to Vaux, where the famous Verdun memorial is located, where the "Trench of Bayonets" has been preserved by a memorial from Americans; the rusting bayonets still thrust out from the earth just as they did after the terrific shelling which buried these French soldiers in their trench back in World War No. 1.

Off again . . . down over St. Mihiel, over Domremy where Jeanne d'Arc was born . . . nearby on a hillside is a beautiful cathedral dedicated to this French Saint. Past Chaumont, where General Pershing's Headquarters were located in 1917-1918 . . . then back to our base.

The war has slowed down, in contrast to those wild days when our troops chased the Heinies across France. But we still make good progress considering the more difficult terrain of hills, rivers, the Siegfried Line and our ever lengthening supply lines. There is evidence that the Krauts are throwing in their last reserves in hopes of staving off complete collapse, of getting a softer peace.

A war correspondent, whose word I believe to be more than ordinarily reliable, told me this story:

One of our American Divisions was holding a certain hill in Germany. They were amazed one morning to see a column of some 500 Heinies come marching up the hill, directly under their guns. Being battle-wise, our boys held their fire. The Heinies came on . . . finally they stopped, began digging themselves in. Our boys lobbed a few shells over into them. They made no effort to get away . . . just kept on digging. So our boys let loose with both artillery and machine guns. Our men were perfectly protected while

the Heinies were entirely exposed. Still the enemy made no attempt to retreat nor to surrender. It was sheer butchery . . . our fire slaughtered them almost to the last man. When it was all over and the few remaining Heinies were brought in as prisoners, our troops found that the whole contingent had been made up of deaf mutes.

How long can this war continue? Your guess is as good as mine. It seems obvious that this German phase of the war is already won. There can be no reason for the Germans to continue except that their fanatical rulers know there is no hope for them in surrender . . . they seem to think they can wear us down to a Peace that will give them some kind of an "out."

There seem to be indications that this end of the War is considered over in other quarters. During recent weeks strange stories have been appearing in the English newspapers. During the race across France, one London paper stated, "It must be realized that the Germans are retreating, not from the Americans, but from us. We are driving the enemy before the American guns." Another story in an English paper said, "The enemy is blinded . . . he doesn't know what is happening . . . he has been blinded by the R.A.F." A picture appeared in another London paper, showing supplies being unloaded from a truck . . . the caption read, "Britain Feeds Paris." (Incidentally, there are mighty few British in Paris . . . at no time have there been many of them there.)

It seems pathetic that such things can happen. But even sorrier stories are told. Not long ago an article ran in a London paper, written by an English correspondent who claimed to be in Chicago at the time. He stated that Chicago was practically ignoring the fact that there was a war on . . . that Chicagoans paid no attention to meat rationing, nor to gas rationing. He claimed that "every other door in downtown Chicago is a 'hot spot,' where women force themselves upon you if you sit at a table, and you cannot rid yourself of them except by force." Please believe me when I say I'm not exaggerating. Chicago seems to be the prime *bete noire* of many of the English . . . it seems to stem mainly from their colossal hate of Colonel McCormick and the *Chicago Tribune*.

And these things happen while four American Armies are fighting in France . . . compared with one Army from the United Kingdom. Even Canada, with her 12,000,000 people has one Army in France. It certainly makes one wonder . . . whose war is this? . . . who is doing the fighting? . . . who is doing the bossing? Who will take care of America's interests? When?

How unfortunate that such bad judgment and such ungracious manners are displayed toward an ally but for whom the British Isles would now be a German suburb. It seems like a poor way to start off on international co-operation for the postwar period.

But the days go along . . . we have the usual stream of VIPERS. Prince Bernhard, now in command of all Netherland Forces, visited us a few days ago. Col. Jock Whitney, who was a German prisoner for eighteen days, tells of having quite a time. The four-star, three-star, and two-star Generals are so numerous that an ordinary guy can hardly find a place to sit down. It is all in the day's work.

Today is September 26th. The days are getting chillier . . . Fall rains are more numerous. We hope this War won't drag through the winter.

Another six weeks will bring us to the eventful date of November 11th. Can Hitler stave off defeat beyond that date?

No one knows, of course. But of this I am sure . . . if the Nazis do drag this on through the winter, Germany will take a blasting and a degree of destruction the like of which they never imagined. They will have learned the hideous side of War that a nation only comprehends when it is blasted, its cities ruined, its industries destroyed.

Maybe they will have to learn this the hardest of all ways. I hope it won't be necessary . . . I hope we need not uselessly spend more of our resources and more of our American lives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Put".



# 14

## VOSGES

12 November 1944

Dear Folks:

Today it is dark and rainy. Sharp gusts of wind whip the big raindrops against the window and whistle around the corner of this hotel, which serves as our headquarters.

Low, grayish-black clouds sweep in over the hills just west of town, hurried along by the erratic wind . . . scraggly cloud-fingers reach down, almost touching the housetops as they pass over this small city.

Today is like most of the days since we came here almost three weeks ago. Rain, rain, rain, and more rain. A few days have been bright. One entire day, brilliant sunshine alternated with blinding snowstorms at seemingly regular intervals . . . almost "every hour, on the hour." Rain or snow are the accepted diets here at this time of year and they promise steady performances until spring.

We are near the front . . . not so far from Germany and not too far from Switzerland. The country is beautiful, regardless of the weather . . . foothills of mountains and valleys that are rich and green.

The hilltops are crowned with pastures or colorful forests . . . though it is mid-November, most of the leaves still cling to the trees.

It has been almost seven weeks since I last wrote you. Four weeks of that time we remained at the rear headquarters where we were during late September . . . then we moved up here. And since coming here, the censor would not release news of our activities. So I delayed writing. A few days ago we told the story to the war correspondents so now I can tell you what we are doing.

The last week of September and the early weeks of October went by in fairly quiet fashion. Our drive to the east slowed down . . . our own activities had to do mainly with preparing for the next drive, when transportation facilities made it possible to bring up the necessary gasoline, ammunition, and supplies.

We had one big "gripe" . . . no mail for many weeks. There was good reason for that . . . and we knew it . . . our boys had swept across France so rapidly, supply lines were so extended . . . and our bombers did such an efficient job of destroying French railroads, locomotives, cars, and bridges . . . that every truck, car, and plane was needed to push forward essential supplies. So of course our mail waited. But that didn't stop us from griping.

A typical conversation got to be: One G.I., "Didn't I get any mail?" Another G.I., "Mail? What's that? Must be a civilian word."

Perhaps you can guess from that how much letters mean to everyone over here. So many people write me asking, "What can I send the boys?" I know the answer . . . gifts aren't primarily important . . . it's letters, letters, and more letters. Personally, I've been very lucky. My mail "drouth" was finally broken by a "jackpot" of fifty letters in one day. But I can't overemphasize the craving of everyone over here for letters from home. And that goes for all ranks . . . from buck private to multi-starred Generals. Don't say you can't write, because your letters are trivial . . . trivial things at home become events of world-shattering importance to the boys over here.

During this period we found opportunity to spend some time in Paris . . . and also to get about to other places.

Paris itself gradually took on more and more of a normal, near-peace-time atmosphere. Movies opened up. Stage shows opened, so they said, but I didn't go see. More and more charcoal-burning cars and buses appeared . . . ramshackle looking affairs that make one wonder how they hold together. But they still go, slowly, and carry capacity loads. Gas-driven cars increased too . . . where the French civilians get gasoline is a mystery to me. More night clubs . . . so they said, for, believe me or not, I haven't been in a night spot since my visit to "Place Pigalle" in early September. Of course the military authorities immediately plastered many of these "spots" with placards reading, "Off limits to all military personnel."

One day we flew over Paris for a half-hour . . . observing the damage done industrial plants, railroad yards, and outlying bridges . . . and of course taking a good look at the city itself. Another day we drove up to Montmartre . . . the highest section of Paris . . . and to the great cathedral of Sacre Coeur which sits on the crest. Here you get a marvelous view of the entire city.

We visited the races at Auteil track, in the Bois de Boulogne . . . as guests of General Valin of the French Air Corps . . . the French gals paraded their millinery finery and frocks almost as in peace times. Some weird "sky pieces," too. The race track at Longchamp is closed.

We stopped in to take a look at Notre Dame, the Louvre, the Invalides, the "Old City," Versailles, drove out to Chantilly and other nearby towns. We didn't really do a sightseeing job . . . we had seen these places before, so our main interest seemed to be in making sure they were still there and unchanged. Paris, as well as Rome, might lay claim to being an "Eternal City."

One day we flew out to one of our Air Corps headquarters, and the Commanding General drove us over to a Prisoner of War stockade. Some 30,000 P.W.'s . . . Heinies, Poles, Rumanians, Russians . . . all in ragged German uniforms. Dirty and unshaven. The Poles were the best looking men of the lot . . . none of them looked much like "The Master Race." Kids in large part and many old men. While we were there they were moving several hundred of the P.W.'s to another camp. And, though the day was fairly warm, each P.W.



wore his heavy overcoat, if he had one, and carried his mess kit or tin cup and fork. A far cry from the stories we hear of how we "entertain" P.W.'s back in the States. Here we have neither the time nor the facilities to "play host" to our captured enemies. And, I might add, neither do we have the inclination.

Another day we flew up to Reims. While there we took advantage of the opportunity to visit the great champagne establishment of Pommery & Greno . . . having had an introduction to M. Carre, the general manager. The town itself was hardly touched by this war, though the nearby airfield was wrecked. M. Carre took us through the caves, or underground tunnels, which house the champagne during the years it is aging and being prepared for final sale.

The whole establishment is located on a hill at the edge of the city. This hill is made up of a kind of chalk rock which, so they claim, gives unusual advantages in the making of champagne. For, though the caves are fifty feet beneath the surface, there is no problem of seepage water. And the temperature is practically unchanged winter and summer. They claim the year round temperature is 52 degrees F.

Nevertheless, as you walk down the more than 100 steps into the caves, you feel you are entering a dark, chilly, tomb-like dungeon. Strings of dim electric light bulbs only accentuate the gloom . . . stacks of bottles on either side, as you walk through one tunnel into another. These bottles are all full of champagne. From tunnel to tunnel you continue . . . they seem endless . . . and they are, almost. These underground passages have a total length of more than eleven miles . . . a veritable maze of tunnels. Here and there you see workmen turning the bottles . . . every bottle lying top down, at an angle of about 135 degrees, so that the sediment collects at the bottle's top.

Soon you feel entirely lost . . . almost panicky at the thought of being left down here alone . . . you are sure you could never find your way out. And, while the stacks of champagne . . . five to six feet high and six to eight feet wide on either side of you . . . might put one in a good humor for a while, it would hardly be a pleasant way to starve . . . or drown.

How much champagne left in France? That I don't know. But there are literally millions of bottles in these caves of Pommery. Some

of the older best vintages are completely gone. But there is plenty of Pommery 1937, and that was a very good year. Whether any of the more recent years will prove good vintages cannot be said until there is time to check them at certain stages of their aging.

The most interesting part of all was to watch them opening bottles to remove the sediment, then recork them for more aging. First, they freeze . . . yes, literally freeze . . . the necks of the bottles in a very cold brine (the bottles always being kept in the top-down position). Next, a hand machine pulls the cork . . . and with the cork comes a small quantity of frozen champagne, carrying with it the sediment which has been collecting over the years. Thus, at one stroke, the sediment is removed. Next a small quantity of candy liquor is added . . . to ferment and give more gas or sparkle to the champagne. Now comes the recapping. Huge corks . . . more than twice as big as the bottle's opening . . . squeezed between powerful jaws of a hand-operated machine . . . the bottle placed beneath the cork and a hand-power driven rod forces the cork straight into the bottle's neck. No wonder champagne corks are so tight . . . now I know why.

So the process goes on. French peasants, men and women, perform these operations deep down in these caves. A gloomy, chilly, drafty workshop. I don't envy them their jobs. There seems no desire to change over to more modern power machinery to handle this work.

We returned to M. Carre's huge, modern office . . . overlooking the city of Reims, and across to the Chemin des Dames where one of the bloodiest battles of World War I was fought . . . where scores of thousands of men were killed in a few days. Not far below, in the city, one sees the beautiful cathedral of Reims . . . badly damaged in the last War, it has escaped serious injury this time.

But to return to the champagne . . . yes, we bought some to take home with us. Pommery 1937, their best vintage, cost us 150 francs per bottle . . . 1,800 francs per case. (Established rate of exchange makes the franc worth 2 cents.) Pink champagne was a trifle more . . . 1,920 francs per case. I hope I am not making you too envious.

Of course M. Carre had to offer us a sample of his wares. Then, in the interests of international amity, he gave the General two "Jeroboams" of Pommery. What's a "Jeroboam"? Well, figure it this way . . . an ordinary bottle of champagne is approximately one quart. A bottle twice that size is a "magnum." A bottle twice the size of a magnum is a Jeroboam. The way I figure it, that makes a Jeroboam hold about one gallon . . . and I don't mean "dry measure."

Did you ever hear of a "Nebuchadnezzar"? . . . neither had I before. To me he had always been a Biblical King. But they showed us some. They hold twice as much as a Jeroboam. No, he didn't give us any of those, nor did we buy any. After all, "fun is fun," but one can't laugh two gallons worth very often.

NOTE FOR EMILY POST: These French champagne experts tell us . . .

- a. One simply doesn't "pop" a champagne cork when opening the bottle. It just isn't being done by those who know.
- b. The shallow, wide glasses (which we've always called "champagne glasses") should not be used for champagne. Rather, one should serve champagne in fairly narrow, deep glasses . . . the kind we call wine glasses or small "brandy-sniffer-type" glasses. The latter hold the bouquet . . . the shallow ones lose it.
- c. One should always stir one's champagne with a trick little glass stick . . . like a "muddler" . . . to kick out some of the bubbles, before drinking it.

Now, aren't you ashamed of how boorish you've been all these years? I'm not kidding either. This is the straight dope, right out of the horse's (I mean expert's) mouth.

Speaking of such things, maybe you'd like to know how much truth there is to the stories of French perfume, Nylon and silk stockings being plentiful in France.

Well, briefly, 'tain't so. That is, 'tain't so they are plentiful. But they do exist and they can be had. For example . . . Chanel No.

5, Chanel No. 22, Chanel Gardenia, Shalimar, Bellodgia, and other well known brands can be obtained. I managed to wangle a few to send home. And I finally wangled a few pairs of Nylons. They say there are silk stockings, but I personally have not seen any for sale. And on all of this stuff the demand runs so far ahead of the supply that since those first few weeks, any of it has been hard to get. Prices are not so bad, in comparison with what it would cost in the States. What I judge to be about two ounces of Chanel No. 5 could be bought for from 500 to 700 francs. Of course the great difference here is because of the heavy duties laid on any such luxury items when imported into the States.

Maybe you have wondered why I speak of "established rate of exchange," when I refer to comparative prices in French money. The reason is this . . . our Allied governments have set up a rate at which French money can be exchanged for American, English, Canadian, or other stable money. (Same thing has been done in other countries, too.) That rate is . . . 200 francs for one English pound . . . the English pound is worth \$4.03 (as pegged) in U. S. money. So the franc is worth two cents American.

But there's a catch to all this. Of course the French had printed money before the Heinies came. Then the Germans printed . . . or caused to be printed . . . more French money. Finally when we arrived, the Allies brought more printed francs . . . printed by ourselves. Inflation thus made the French money worth less and less . . . or, to put it the other way, prices have gone higher and higher until the franc is no longer worth the "established price." The French recognize this in their own dealings among themselves. They price everything accordingly.

We (i.e., U. S. military) also recognize this in so far as wages we pay civilian help. A chef's wages might have been okeh at 1,600 to 2,000 francs per month in 1939 . . . today we set a scale of 3,000 to 3,500 francs per month for the same individual.

The French "black market" will offer francs for as little as three-fourths cent U.S. each . . . they will offer as much as 100 to 175 francs for a single pack of American cigarettes . . . and so on.

Of course we American soldiers are not permitted to barter with, nor accept money for, any American product. And our finance office pays us in francs at the "established rate."

So there is confusion. Prices are not what they seem . . . nor what they should be in terms of "established rates." Somehow American cigarettes and other commodities do find their way into French hands.

I found the same sort of situation in China a year ago. We insisted (officially) on paying \$1.00 for every 20 Chinese dollars . . . while the Chinese were offering up to 100 Chinese dollars for \$1.00 U.S. I understand that today the Chinese unofficial rate is 185 or perhaps even 200 Chinese dollars for \$1.00 U.S. But I believe we still insist on accepting only 20 Chinese dollars for each \$1.00 U.S. on all "official" transactions.

I'm no financial genius. Maybe that's why it seems to me we are attempting to support all the shaky currencies of the world at our own expense.

During our days in Paris we found time for a bit of social activity also. Madame Ritz and her son Charles . . . wife and son of the famous Ritz who established Ritz Hotels around the world . . . entertained General Royce and a few of the rest of us at a dinner party at the Ritz. Her guest of honor was Marlene Dietrich.

A few evenings later, we entertained at dinner . . . at our "town house," of which I have told you. Our guests included Air Vice-Marshall Nairn and Group Captain Homer Smith of the Canadian Royal Air Force . . . Princess de Polignac (one of the principal owners of Pommery Champagne), Marlene Dietrich, and two Ladies So-and-So whose names have escaped me. Marlene? Yes, she's good looking . . . but the camera man apparently deserves much credit, too. My overall impression was that Madame Ritz is a lovely Elderly Lady and the Princess de Polignac is most attractive.

Another movie notable showed up. This time as an officer at our HQ. The hard-riding, two-gun hero of western films, Colonel Tim McCoy. We've seen quite a lot of him. He moved up to our new HQ with us. An evening or so ago I helped him polish off a

bottle of very nice wine he had found in the hinterland near here. He's very genuine and unaffected. I've taken a real liking to him.

Another new acquaintance is Henri Marquisan, a Frenchman. I met him through a French Air Corps officer we knew in the Middle East. Henri is no boy . . . he is at the sixty mark. He flew in World War I . . . was shot down . . . recovering, he was sent to the States as an instructor in Texas and California. So he speaks excellent "American." His wife also speaks American, but with an English accent . . . for years she has represented *Vogue* over here . . . she has never been to America.

Perhaps you will understand why I mention them when I tell you that in 1940, when the Heinies broke into France, Henri volunteered and, at the age of fifty-six, actually flew until the Medicos forced him out. I have enjoyed visiting in their home . . . talking for hours about France, Europe, and America. If there were only more people like them in ALL countries, the world's problems would be few.

France has been beautiful this fall. I have been amazed how late the leaves kept their summer green . . . how long they clung to the trees. Then, suddenly, just before mid-October a change came . . . almost overnight the parks and forests burst into color. It has been like home. Even today, the leaves are still numerous on the trees and their colors are still quite bright. Each day as we drove from our quarters to HQ through lovely parks, I have marveled at the quick change and the attractive colorings.

But we didn't spend all of these weeks in France. On October 12th I left for the United Kingdom on several special jobs. Weather wasn't good, but except for bad visibility over the Channel it wasn't so bad. We landed at a London airfield . . . spent the night in town. Next day I took care of some business and before noon we were in the air again . . . bound for Glasgow, Scotland.

The weather was fine until we crossed the Scottish border and started over the Highlands. Soon we ran into a snowstorm. We swung back, to the west and out over the Irish Sea. Then we did get weather. It rained "cats and dogs" . . . visibility was poor. Finally, we came in low over the coast . . . spotted a field and landed

to check weather. It was an R.A.F. field, and we lunched with the boys in training there . . . English and Canadians. An hour or so later they told us the weather was "flyable," and we took off in a heavy rain.

We hit plenty of rain and plenty of turbulence . . . but in about forty minutes we were over Glasgow. Visibility was bad, but we found the field, swung round to come in. Visibility was so limited that we lost the field twice, in circling to come in . . . each time as we swung low we flew directly over the great Glasgow shipbuilding yards. The third try, we made it okeh. I told the pilot later that on those swings I had had such a good view I had learned most of the details of the Glasgow shipbuilding business.

In the rain, we parked our ship and found our way to the local "tram" (streetcar if you insist) and rode downtown. We had wired ahead for reservations at the Central Hotel. Walking into the hotel, the clerks told us they had "no reservations" . . . they (the clerks) were not "bonnie wee lassies," but mature Scottish women . . . finally, after kidding us a while, they broke down and said sure they had rooms for us and added, "It is good to see some of you Americans come back to cheer us up again. We have missed you since most of your boys have left."

In short, they were friendly . . . that was a great shock after the treatment we had learned to expect in hotels in the lower portion of the U.K. And it wasn't because they needed business . . . they were overflowing with guests. They just seemed cheerful and pleasant . . . and we found the same thing on the street, in stores, with taxi drivers. It's great to have strange people make you feel you are welcome.

We stayed in Scotland until Tuesday. On Monday, we drove across to Edinburgh . . . only thirty-five to forty miles . . . in perfectly vile, rainy weather. Saw downtown Edinburgh, with its great Castle sitting high on the sheer-sided rocky promontory right in the center of town . . . finished our business and drove back to Glasgow. Here, too, the people were friendly. The gals are pinkcheeked and good looking . . . they help pull up the average for the U.K.

But I'm forgetting to tell you of the weekend. Saturday I phoned some friends of Colonel Fowler (you'll remember he went with me when I went to Paris in early September) to deliver a message for him. Immediately they wanted to know what I was doing, wouldn't I come out for dinner. I confessed I wasn't busy . . . hadn't expected to be there that long.

They picked me up and drove me out to their country home, seven miles in the country . . . a lovely old stone house built in the late 1700's. He is the head of a large manufacturing firm that makes marine equipment . . . name is Weir . . . she is a Canadian . . . his "Pa" is Lord Somebodyorother, exactly who I never learned . . . it didn't seem important to them nor to me.

We spent a perfectly delightful (to me at least) evening. Discussed "everything under the sun" . . . subjects one isn't supposed to mention to our "British Cousins" . . . and I found them extremely intelligent people with a sense of honesty and fairness that is rare. That does not mean we agreed on everything . . . we didn't . . . but our differences were primarily because of points of view and individual interests.

They were gluttons for punishment . . . invited me back for Sunday dinner and the afternoon . . . and I, having no social *savoir-faire*, accepted.

So, Sunday, they picked me up again. I found when I arrived that they had another guest . . . a Canadian Naval Officer who had just returned from the attack on the Tirpitz in Norwegian waters . . . his ship had been badly damaged and they had had harrowing weeks getting back to the safety of a British port.

Of course we talked much. But the high point of the day, for me, was a "shooting expedition" we went on just before dark.

As dusk was setting in, Mr. Weir suggested that we "go see if we can shoot a few pigeons." I really knew nothing of what he meant. But ashamed to display my ignorance, I acquiesced.

So he gave us each a shotgun and some shells. We stepped out of the house. From a nearby clump of trees we heard a call, unmistakably that of a cock pheasant. He said to me, "You go up that



way—perhaps you'll get a shot at that cock." I had no idea whether it was the hunting season or not . . . but I went my way.

One hundred yards or so from the house a rabbit crossed my path . . . I raised my gun . . . remembered I didn't even know that rabbits were supposed to be shot. So I held my fire. Another rabbit galloped across my path . . . an easy shot . . . still I didn't fire. Pondering this, I walked a few steps farther. Suddenly there was a whirr in the thicket . . . I knew they were pheasants . . . in the fading light I saw two of them "taking off." I fired. Nothing seemed to happen except that the birds seemed to continue on their way.

I took a few steps. Again the whirr of wings. Through the trees, in the dim light, I could barely see them. Then, before I could fire, one of them fell heavily to the ground. I couldn't understand it. But I walked ahead some fifty yards, searched, and soon found a bird fluttering on the ground . . . a beautiful cock pheasant.

I took it back to the house . . . tried to explain what had happened . . . but all I got credit for was "spinning a fine yarn" . . . apparently they thought I was a crack shot. I still can't figure it out. Did I hit that bird on that shot? . . . had he stopped temporarily in another tree, then tried to take off and fallen? Or had I missed the one I shot at and accidentally hit another cock that was sitting in the trees, who fell when he tried to take off a few seconds later? It is still a mystery to me. They think I'm a shot. I'm willing to settle for that. But I'm still puzzled.

At any rate I've had a lot of fun bragging to the General and the boys about "fowling at my shooting box in Scotland." And when I left Scotland I had a particularly warm spot in my heart for the Scots and for Scotland. I'm mighty glad to have had that visit of four days to the Highland Country.

Our trip back was "ungood." Again we flew low over the Irish Sea . . . it rained heavily . . . visibility was almost nil . . . cold waters below . . . they say a man can live not more than seven minutes in such water, in a life preserver . . . in a dinghy he can live longer, but we had no dinghies.

The weather continued vile all the way to London. The turbulence was most annoying . . . the ship tossed and pitched . . . I can only describe it by saying that the ship's motion reminded me of a burlesque "queen" doing the "grinds."

We made London after several intermediate stops on account of the weather. And in London the weather was equally unpleasant . . . heavy rain, no lights on the streets (it doesn't seem to make sense that London streets are still unlighted . . . Glasgow, even Paris, streets are lighted).

Hotels were crowded but I finally chiseled a room at the Claridge Hotel. Next morning as I sat at breakfast, alone, in came a familiar face . . . said "hello" . . . sat down with me for his meal. It was the big, husky, blonde Norwegian Viking, Bernt Balchen . . . famous flier of Arctic flights and heroic rescues in the North Country . . . now a Colonel in the U.S. Air Forces.

Balchen told me Larry Fritz was in the hotel . . . I had not seen Larry in years . . . formerly he was vice-president of T. W. A. As I went out into the lobby I ran into Larry . . . now a Brigadier General, Commanding General of the North Atlantic Wing, Air Transport Command. So I had a second breakfast with Larry and several of his staff.

Shortly after my return to France we got new orders. General Royce was instructed to organize a new Air Force and to proceed to new headquarters near the front. A few days later, after waiting for flyable weather and getting none, we took off by car.

On our way we stopped at Chaumont . . . General Pershing's headquarters during World War No. 1. We stopped for lunch at the little hotel in the center of town . . . a good lunch, too . . . chicken soup, chicken, bread, butter, plenty of vegetables, cheese . . . all for 50 francs each. Then we visited the old HQ of General Pershing. The lower two floors appeared okeh but only the skeleton of the top floor remained. The French guards said *Les Boche* had fired the place before they left. Probably the lower floors were gutted also, but we didn't go in. There's a plaque at the gate which says the place had been occupied by General Pershing as his HQ during World War No. 1 . . . perhaps that is why the Germans burned it.

Mid-afternoon found us driving into this small city, nestled in between the hills, not far from the Vosges Mountains. In peace times this was a resort town, as are so many of the towns in this area . . . so there are quite a number of good hotels which give us unusually good facilities for HQ and billets.

Our advance man had already located an attractive, chalet-type house for the General . . . nothing fancy, but with lots of comfort. Eight rooms plus quarters for the drivers and our Major-domo, Sergeant Budd . . . we couldn't run a place without Budd. He takes care of everything.

Best of all we have chauffage central . . . my, my, isn't my French getting me down? Well anyhow we have a furnace . . . and fire-places and auxiliary stoves, as well; hot water for shaving and enough for an occasional bath. Good French beds and plenty of bedclothes. So we really are in luxury.

When we arrived there were some thousands of internees still living in many of the hotels (internees of the Germans . . . of all nationalities . . . American, British, etc.). So the hotels were in filthy shape. The internees had been crowded together . . . whole families living, cooking, eating, sleeping in one room. No chance to keep the room nor themselves clean. Vermin infested everything.

Old folks, youngsters, and "mediums." One morning I was checking up on one of the hotels, thinking that all internees had gone. Opening a door I found a family . . . papa, an older woman, mama in bed with a five-day-old baby. They had not been able to move them yet.

Barbed wire barricades surrounded all the hotels and houses where the internees had been held. To keep warm they had had small sheet-metal stoves . . . these hotels were built for summer only . . . so scores of funny little stove pipes stuck out of the windows of every hotel. I don't know how they got fuel, but I do know that those small stoves smoke like sin when the wind gets contrary. They must have had plenty of trouble trying to keep warm without suffocating from fumes and smoke.

Now all of the internees are gone . . . moved elsewhere by the Red Cross. The furniture has been renovated or burned . . . the hotels fumigated. We are well installed and comfortable.

Oh yes, we do have some problems. We also tried to use those funny Heinie stoves in our offices. One day they would work swell. Next day, the wind would shift and clouds of smoke would backfire into the room . . . a good gust would force tongues of flame out of the base of the stove . . . almost suffocating one before you could open the windows and doors.

But we've licked that. We cut into flues and ran the smoke pipes into them, instead of out the windows. Now we have no trouble . . . we are as snug as can be. The wind, snow, and rain can blast as they will.

And we are busy. This new Air Force is made up of both American and French flying units . . . fighter-bombers and medium-bombers . . . the first time that American and French fliers have flown together, in a single air force, since the last war.

We support the SIXTH ARMY GROUP under General Devers . . . this is the outfit that came up from the Mediterranean . . . the American 7th Army under General Patch and the French 1st Army under General de Lattre de Tassigny. Likewise our flying units, or most of them, came up with the drive from the south. We have General Saville's XII Tactical Air Command, from the XII Air Force and General Girardot's 1st French Air Corps . . . plus some other units.

Of course it is definitely an American Air Force . . . the French are attached to us for operation. Our name is FIRST TACTICAL AIR FORCE (Provisional). That "provisional" means simply that this air force has been organized in the field to meet an immediate need, without formal authorization from the War Department, Washington. Formal authorization will doubtless follow later.

Of course General Royce is the Commanding General of the whole Air Force. I am Chief of Staff. And I have a French Lieutenant Colonel as an Assistant Chief of Staff to help co-ordinate operations with the French units.

We are already in actual operation . . . have been for more than a week. Our greatest difficulty is weather. Low ceilings, rain, and snow make flying difficult most of the time and impossible too much of the time.

But operations go on. And we manage to get in some good licks. If the weather man would only give us two weeks of clear, snappy weather things would happen to make one's head swim. That's too much to expect, of course. We make the best of what we get.

All in all, this is the most interesting set-up I've had during this War. And I like this spot. It is pleasant in many ways in spite of the weather. However, we are all hoping for the break that will enable us to wind up this War . . . and soon.

The news of this Air Force was released some days ago . . . perhaps you saw something about it. Remember, when you see anything about the FIRST TACTICAL AIR FORCE (Prov.), or FIRST T.A.F., or T.A.C.A.F. . . . or anything about the XII T.A.C. or the French Air Corps . . . that's us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Put".



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VOSGES

15 December 1944

Dear Folks:

"Nothing ever happens here" . . . it is like living at "Grand Hotel."

•Maybe that's a slight exaggeration. But since I wrote you, a bit more than a month ago, I've been sticking close to the job . . . I haven't been beyond the city limits of this town, except once for a short trip to a nearby city.

It is strangely quiet here . . . particularly when one remembers there is a real war going on not so far up ahead. We are detached from it . . . we see little of it . . . our contact is mainly through reports received and orders issued.

At night, groups of planes go over . . . we listen . . . no anti-aircraft guns break out, so we conclude they are friendly ships . . . bombing missions are over Germany whenever weather permits. During

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the day we see formations overhead . . . when clouds are low we hear only the deep rumble of many engines . . . then perhaps through a break in the clouds the great groups show up against the blue, the bright sunlight flashing from the ships' sides.

A large Army General Hospital is near us. Ambulances, with huge Red Crosses on their sides, come and go. A visit through a few of the wards forcefully reminds you that the war goes on in grim reality. You are surprised to find that a large portion of the cases are boys with "trench feet" . . . a painful condition resulting from days and weeks of sloshing about in chill water, mud, and snow with shoes and socks always soaked . . . a change of shoes and socks relieves the situation only for a short time. It is difficult to comprehend the hardships this cold, wet weather imposes on the ground troops. After you've seen these cases you watch the succession of chill, rainy days and you wonder how the boys on the actual fighting front stand up under it. Real cold, with frozen ground, is much to be preferred.

We keep busy. The walls of our "War Room" are covered with great maps. These form our board on which we plot the war situation . . . it is like playing a gigantic game of chess.

Each evening our intelligence officers brief us on what has happened during the past twenty-four hours . . . what *our* planes did . . . what our ground forces did on our particular front . . . what our other air forces, our other ground forces did up north of us . . . what happened in Italy, what the Russians did in Hungary . . . what developed in the Pacific.

The lines shift . . . the pins move . . . indicating the changes of battalions, regiments, divisions, corps, armies, airfields . . . pawns on this great chessboard of war.

Of course our greatest personal interest is in our own immediate front . . . that portion held by the 7th American Army and the 1st French Army. These are the troops our fliers work with . . . our daily chores center around what these fliers of ours are doing.

With great satisfaction we have watched these lines move forward during past weeks. The French pushed through the Belfort

Gap, took Belfort . . . on along the Swiss border to the Rhine, then north to Mulhouse and slightly beyond. There the flooded country slowed progress. Farther north the 7th Army drove in past Saarbours, through the Saverne Gap and down into Strasbourg . . . then fanned out to the north and south. Slowly this pocket between the Vosges and the Rhine is being reduced . . . our forces press in from the crest of the Vosges to the west, the 7th hammers down from the north, and the French keep pressure on the south. Fields are thick with mines . . . rivers and lowlands are flooded . . . these are our greatest obstacles rather than the enemy.

If we only had decent weather it would be a different story. Day after day low clouds and rains hinder operations . . . our planes are in the air whenever it is flyable, but good days are too few. Yet we manage to deal Jerry some heavy blows. As more good days come the air attack will step up and send him reeling as it did in Normandy and clear across France.

As we check our progress at these daily briefings so also we check our losses. We tabulate the number of enemy aircraft, locomotives, railroad cars, motor vehicles "destroyed" and "damaged." We count our own planes "lost" or "missing" or "damaged." Our losses keep down to a very reasonable figure in view of flak and enemy aircraft encountered.

During all these weeks we have never seen an enemy plane over this immediate area . . . we have not heard a bomb explode . . . not a shot fired in anger.

Oh yes, the enemy knows we are here. Weeks ago, shortly after we began operations, he paid us the compliment of telling of our arrival, over the radio.

Perhaps you have heard of "Axis Annie" . . . the female who broadcasts from Berlin, in English. Our boys listen to her quite a lot. She plays American swing records . . . then passes out a line of exaggerated propaganda that is amusing to our troops. Well, "Annie" welcomed us . . . and added that their planes would be over to see us . . . i.e., to bomb or strafe us . . . on Christmas Eve. It is a good



boast. But Fritz hasn't made a single appearance as yet . . . he does even less here than he did in Normandy. So it rates as much attention as the rest of the Heinie propaganda . . . no more.

Thus the days pass . . . everything deals with war, yet right here there is no war . . . but a short ride in a jeep soon takes you to where Heinie shells come driving across from the Siegfried line beyond the Rhine.

Isolated though we are, we still have visitors . . . some of them very much of the VIPER class. Admiral Kirk was here not long ago . . . we threw a dinner for him, Lieutenant General Devers and other "brass hats" of their staffs. Five-Starred-General Bouscat, head of the French Forces in the Field, was here for lunch a few days ago. On Armistice Day we took part in a ceremony with the French . . . General Patch and General Dahlquist spoke as did also our own General Schramm (General Royce was away). In fact, I wrote General Schramm's speech and he insisted I go along with him as the "ghost" of the piece.

After that Armistice Day ceremony, the French put on a review of some of their troops . . . regulars, F.F.I., even school children paraded. At the head of one rather nondescript company of French troops a black sheep marched . . . without benefit of collar, halter, or other guide or restraint. He made a strange mascot . . . strutting ahead of his outfit like a drum major . . . he seemed to realize his important role, to understand exactly what was expected of him.

Thanksgiving came . . . operations went on as on any other day. But we did have a good turkey dinner in the evening. There is no "time out" for holidays . . . Saturdays, Sundays, are merely numbers on the calendar.

Perhaps our biggest excitement was a party we had at the house to listen to the Army-Navy game. We had eight or nine officers in from various fighter and bomber wings and groups. The game started about 7:00 p. m. . . . and our "Hallicrafter" radio brought the play-by-play description direct from Baltimore. We had dinner served while we listened. Of course the score was right . . . so you can guess that

"fun was had" before the evening was over. For a few hours we were all back home.

The radio is our only real source of news outside of official war reports . . . we see no newspapers except when someone brings some in from Paris or London. Charlie McCarthy comes via recordings as do some others of the popular shows in the States. Of course they are old but that makes no difference. In the midst of such a program the radio oftentimes fades . . . a harsh, guttural German voice will come in, almost screaming propaganda . . . the Heinie fades out and Charlie continues with his foolishness. A strange contrast.

So our life is not too rugged. Our house is comfortable . . . our fireplace sends out a cheery warmth. Sergeant Budd takes care of us to a point of near-luxury. The other morning I reached for my G.I. shoes . . . they were shined to a mirror-like finish wherein one could have shaved. That was normal. I started to put my foot in . . . to my amazement I found the brogans contained *shoe-trees*. I claim that's a new high of some kind.

I've been getting quite a number of letters from friends in the States asking if I can help them get more detailed information about some relative or friend who has been reported "Missing" or "Killed in Action" over here. Naturally I'd like to help . . . I have tried to do what I can. But it is almost impossible to get detailed information in such cases and I'd like to explain why.

In the first place . . . we are in Eastern France. Our HQ is not near the HQ of any other air force. The 8th Air Force HQ is still in England.

In order to get any detailed information in such cases it would be necessary to talk with some of the boys who were with the missing party when he disappeared . . . they might know what did happen.

Obviously it is a long, long chance that one can locate these companions . . . even if one had time to go to the proper HQ or group or squadron. By the time we get the news, weeks or months have passed . . . other members of the squadron have usually finished their "tour" of missions and been transferred elsewhere. Moreover, my duties do not permit me to make such trips.

So I hope I won't be misunderstood when I am forced to write that I'm sorry but I can't see any way in which I can be of much help. I know how friends and relatives feel. But I cannot honestly promise to get the information desired. In time, the War Department will send on what new information may be known.

I know that is a very poor answer to bereaved relatives and friends. I wish I knew a better one.

Well, the election is over. For months before November 7th I got many letters asking "How are the boys overseas going to vote?" Now I get letters asking, "How do the boys feel about the outcome?"

Of course I don't know how the great majority feel. I've hesitated to make any comment. But now that the "shouting and the tumult" have died away a bit, maybe I can give a partial answer . . . at least I can report on some reactions I get.

To be blunt, I don't think most of the boys in the service think very much about it. It may sound strange to many of us "oldsters" but the great majority of these boys are not old enough to have any political consciousness of any other regime in the U.S.A. but the one we have now. Probably well over 50 per cent of these boys have no real recollection of any other President than F.D.R.

Also they are busy . . . they know only vaguely about the real issues involved . . . they have had very little news of what has gone on in the U.S.A. What news they have had has come to them through such papers as *Stars & Stripes* or English or French newspapers.

I don't know whether it is fair to say that any political news in *Stars & Stripes* has been strained before we get it . . . but it probably is true to say that at least such news is "pre-digested."

The English papers are almost fanatical for F.D.R. Already they have swung into a campaign to show that Lend-Lease has been really almost a "50-50" deal. They claim to base their statements on certain facts that F.D.R. gave Congress a short time ago (what this might have been I wouldn't know . . . we don't get that news . . . only the English interpretation of it). English papers go to great lengths to show how "they supported the American war-effort." That seems to sound a bit "vice versa," but it is the "party line."

The French papers either follow much the same line as the English or they say nothing. Maybe there's a reason for this. A French editor was tried recently for criticizing the English and Americans . . . he got twenty years. According to the English papers, no claim was made that the editor was in the pay of the enemy, that he was in any way dealing with the enemy. His crime, apparently, was criticism. So one wonders how much freedom of the press there is over here.

Of course one does hear comments from officers and enlisted men. Their comments seem to follow their prejudices and selfish interests much as they do among civilians at home. I have yet to see any evidence that many of the boys make any effort to find out what it is all about. And with the confusing news that is presented to them over here they do not have much chance of getting all sides of the facts. Moreover, they seem satisfied to accept what is dished out to them. Perhaps their youth, their lack of any personal experience with anything else, accounts for that.

One evening recently several of us spent an interesting evening at our house with a very intelligent Air Commodore of the R.A.F. of one of the British Commonwealth of Nations. (Air Commodore? He ranks with a Brigadier General in our Air Force.) We "booted the ball about" quite a bit during some three hours over highballs. He talked freely . . . so did we. We asked him some point blank questions . . . e.g., "Do you feel that 'The Four Freedoms' and 'The Atlantic Charter' are truly live principles that mean what they seem to mean?"

To such questions he merely smiled and shook his head in the negative. Rather, he insisted, America was forced into the war to protect her foreign trade . . . that this is the reason America must participate in world-wide affairs, in a broad way, after the war.

I quote his ideas because, in my observation, they are typical of the ideas held in practically every European country . . . in England, France, and other Allied nations and co-belligerents. Certainly these ideas are not the exception over here.

Of course such ideas are at wide variance with what most Americans have believed. Our boys in the service seem to accept the prevailing American opinion, without question.

It is true that certain things they have seen overseas are beginning to disturb them. They wonder about how Lend-Lease operates. The uprisings in Belgium seemed strange antics for people just "liberated" . . . as we have understood the term "liberated." And the current difficulties in Greece are perhaps the most puzzling of all. They are having difficulty understanding what has happened . . . why, now that Greece is "liberated," it becomes necessary for the English to fight the Greeks.

So . . . if there is any answer to "How do the boys feel?" it is perhaps (a) they have thought little to date but are satisfied "as is," (b) they are beginning to be disturbed by certain events and certain experiences, (c) eventually their ideas may crystallize into a reaction.

Demaree Bess of *Saturday Evening Post* and Ed Angly of *Chicago Sun* have been with us the past four or five days, staying at the house. Bess has spent some twenty years in Europe and the Far East . . . Angly likewise has covered the world. We last saw Angly in Egypt last December. Since then he has been in Russia for ten and a half months . . . has only recently come to this theater.

Of course our talk has covered many subjects . . . Russia, her part in the war, her position compared with that of the British Empire, the Balkans, the current "trouble" in Greece. The eye-witness pictures they give you of facts, political policies, and ambitions of nations are startling. If the mature judgments of such men mean anything, "This Brave New World" we've been promised, seems fairly certain to be preceded by something a bit less perfect . . . it seems obvious that we Americans, as a people, have yet to face the facts of international life.

The war moves on . . . slowly and doggedly, in the face of most adverse weather. There is much evidence that the enemy is not so strong.

We hear a story of one of the forts at Metz which our troops by-passed some weeks ago, leaving a limited force to contain the enemy in the forts. One day the American C.O. called on the Heinies, in this one fort, to surrender. The Krauts held a council . . . sent back word, "Give us a token bombing first." So we sent over a few

planes, dropped four fair-sized bombs . . . the Heinies ran up the white flag and surrendered.

But, "nothing ever happens here" . . . it is like living at "Grand Hotel."

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Put".

A MERRY CHRISTMAS to all of you . . . and here's hoping for a better NEW YEAR.



# 16

VOSGES

14 January 1945

Dear Folks:

This morning our valley is a veritable Fairyland. Trees, bushes, fences are heavy with a deep frost . . . valley and hills covered with white Christmas trees, like those spray jobs we have at home, as though a giant spray gun had painted everything with a coat of dazzling white. The ground is covered with snow . . . clean and white as though newly fallen.

Even the air seems frozen . . . literally . . . it has an opacity that seems to come from its moisture having been frozen into tiny ice crystals . . . a white frozen fog. Never before have I seen anything like this anywhere.

Cold? Yes, we are having real winter . . . a bitter cold, even though temperatures are not extreme. For three weeks or more we have had temperatures ranging from daytime maximum of 31 to early morning minimum of 5. It was 5 above yesterday morning . . . this morning it was 11. Snowfall between Christmas and New Year's . . . we've had several light snowfalls since then . . . but all told we now have only five or six inches. Not once during these

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weeks has it thawed. The roads are hard packed with icy snow . . . they are treacherously slippery . . . it would be great for sleighing.

In my last letter I believe I told you, "Nothing ever happens here."

Hardly was that letter mailed when the Heinies broke out up north of us. It so happened that we left for the south of France just as that drive started. At the time of our departure we knew only that some action had begun up in that area.

From Marseilles we flew over to Cannes to spend a few days. There we were pretty well out of touch with detailed news. But the *Stars & Stripes* told us the enemy had made considerable progress. Then rumors began to build up.

Early on the morning we were to leave Cannes we heard stories of parachutist landings. They said, "Chutists have landed, in force, in this immediate vicinity . . . between Cannes and Marseilles."

There was no confirmation of this. Nevertheless, discretion being the better part of valor, our crew spent an hour checking the plane for any possible sabotage, any "booby traps." Nothing was found. We took off and flew to Marseilles without incident.

There the same rumors were current . . . likewise without confirmation. We headed north . . . stopped at Dijon for lunch . . . landed at our home field in late afternoon.

Our driver who met us had stories to tell, too . . . "five or six chutes were found near our HQ" . . . another wild rumor had it that "fifteen or eighteen Frenchmen had their throats slit, some eight to ten miles from town." Enemy planes had been over the night before, or at least ack-ack had broken out . . . no enemy planes had been identified.

But though the rumors were "wild," there was grim reality to the fact that the enemy had broken through over a sizable front and had penetrated forty miles or more into Belgium and Luxembourg.

Most of the early days of the drive, weather had been bad, making air operations practically impossible. Apparently the Germans had figured on that . . . counting on weather to hold our planes on the



ground to offset the advantages of our dominance of the air. (The long range weather forecast at this time predicted two weeks of bad weather.)

But on the 23rd of December it cleared and our fighter-bombers and medium bombers went to work. Likewise the other air forces threw in great numbers of aircraft, strafing the enemy's troops, tanks, motor vehicles, gun positions . . . behind the enemy, the "heavies" laid down tremendous tonnages of bombs on railroads, trains, locomotives, marshalling yards . . . breaking up his supply lines.

And the good weather held . . . for five days solid . . . clear days of bright sunshine and good visibility. Such a stretch of good weather was more than we had dared hope for . . . it was a Godsend. Then a few bad days interrupted . . . but again the weather cleared and for several days more our air activity went on in an intensive way.

I won't try to tell you the details . . . you've read about the action of the "bulge" into Belgium-Luxembourg, and the second, smaller break-through in the Saar region. This much is certain . . . a big factor in stopping the Heinies and starting them back the road whence they came was the hammering our planes gave them. Not only were they hit hard in the "bulge" . . . their supply lines were disrupted or cut off completely. Now they are withdrawing.

Why did it happen? Perhaps you have your own ideas, as we have. Of course all of the facts can be known only to the "Big Boys" who sit at the top and get *all* the information. It does seem strange that after the pounding the enemy has been taking for months, he could suddenly rush out and wrench the offensive away from us and make us "scratch gravel" to hold him and throw him back.

Regardless of what were the reasons behind what happened, I personally believe it may have been a good thing it happened to us . . . aside from our losses, which of course cannot be replaced.

Why? Well, before we invaded Normandy we envisioned a terrifically difficult task. We prepared for it. We did the job so well it went off better than we had anticipated. We ran the enemy clear across France . . . apparently helpless and in complete disorder.

We got confident . . . perhaps too confident and "cocky." Already, in our minds, we had the war over . . . we were planning on coming home . . . in the States the "Big Talk" set the date for Victory and began planning for a return to Peace.

Then we "caught it."

It is a tough way to learn lessons. Maybe by the time this war is over . . . and we have a chance to figure up what it has cost us . . . in lives and in those things that have made up our "American Way of Life" . . . and we have learned what the war was really about and what we accomplished by our sacrifices . . . maybe then we shall have learned our lessons so we'll quit kidding ourselves with pretty fairy stories . . . for a generation or two, at least. I hope so.

One thing this "scare" did do . . . it tightened up our security precautions. The stories of German parachutists landing behind our lines . . . some of them in American or British uniforms (and undoubtedly many of them had a basis of fact) . . . put everyone on the qui vive.

The M.P.'s have gotten tougher. One gets stopped oftener. Merely having identification papers is not necessarily enough. And the M.P.'s take no chances . . . while one examines you, another stands behind him with a "tommy gun" ready for action. To protect themselves against the possibility of disguised enemies throwing acid into their faces, they wear face-covering helmets and goggles.

Some of their devices for catching English-speaking Heinies have been most ingenious. I've been stopped, had my credentials checked, then been asked. "So, you're from Chicago? What does 'Cub' mean to you?" Another time I was asked, "Who or what was 'Gehrig'?" Once they shot at me, "How much does an air mail stamp cost?"

In short, they ask things that only a bona fide American who had lived in the States, recently, would know. I imagine it proves very effective in trapping disguised Heinies.

The day after the Heinies started the drive (it took three days before it got well under way), I made a trip up across the Vosges, down through the Saverne Gap, and across the Rhine Valley to Strasbourg.

We left early in the morning, before daylight . . . just the driver and myself, in the General's staff car . . . to check up on a number of things at several towns along the route.

It was a clear, snappy morning. As we climbed up out of our little valley, the sun greeted us from across the Vosges. With more altitude, it got colder . . . ice covered small pools and backwater of small streams. The early sun painted the few clouds above the horizon with a riot of brilliant colors . . . great banks of fiery reds, purples . . . broad bands of silver . . . light, fluffy bits of pink here and there . . . a stray chariot of violent scarlet. From the crests of the hills we looked across miles of rolling fields, the purple Vosges in the distance. Thousands of evergreen trees covered the higher ridges . . . snow lay in great patches.

It was Sunday morning. As we passed through villages and towns the local populace streamed by, in their Sunday finery, going to or coming from early masses. They stared at us . . . and the big American car . . . we were as much objects of curiosity to them as they were to us.

Through Saarbourg and on toward Phalsbourg . . . smashed, burned tanks and trucks at the side of the road . . . deserted trenches and fox holes . . . two small improvised graveyards just inside a field with perhaps 20 graves each . . . new earth and flowers that are now faded . . . Americans lie there . . . War passed this way not so many weeks ago.

The road winds down into the Saverne Gap . . . large wrecked German guns stick their muzzles crazily skyward from the edge of forests or dugout emplacements. This is the gap the enemy defended viciously . . . until our troops swung around and came upon him from the flanks and rear. The town of Saverne is an attractive, small city . . . old-style houses, but they look substantial and comfortable.

This is Alsace . . . battle ground for many wars . . . now the French "Tricolor" and the "Stars and Stripes" wave from most of the houses . . . but the people speak German. From 1870 until World War I the Germans controlled Alsace . . . then the French until 1940

. . . for the past four years the schools have taught German; French was forbidden.

One can't help wondering, "What does it all mean to these simple people? Battles have flowed over them and engulfed them . . . political changes have brought them destruction and death. How can they feel any great enthusiasm for Victory, no matter who wins?"

The Rhine Valley spreads out below . . . Strasbourg in the distance . . . beyond, the dark line of small mountains that are Germany, across the river . . . the beginning of the Black Forest.

Strasbourg itself is attractive, relatively little damaged by the war . . . there wasn't much fighting in the city as the Germans were surprised and left hurriedly. It is an ancient city with old-fashioned buildings . . . high sloping roofs that show five stories of garret windows . . . canals, a veritable maze of them, wind through the town, part of the ancient, but still used, river-canal system of barge transportation.

The boom of heavy guns rolls through the streets . . . from our own artillery nearby . . . answering shells from the Siegfried line across the Rhine. We ask how to drive down to the riverfront, to take a "look-see" across. They say, "Better not . . . there is much small arms fire back and forth . . . Jerry loves vehicles for targets . . . and that staff car would be especially inviting." 'Course they would have been fooled for they would have thought there was a high ranking General in the car. But I have no hankering for a "Purple Heart" just to satisfy my curiosity. So we finish our work and head back . . . it was well after dark when we reached home.

Christmas came. The enemy drive was at its height . . . we were busy, but we had an extraordinarily good Christmas dinner, our sole celebration. Rising from the dinner table we took off to drive up to our Advance HQ . . . a clear, sunshiny day . . . good for air operations.

The roads were heavy with trucks, motor cars, jeeps, huge pieces of heavy equipment of all sorts, big guns. Armies in action require an unbelievable amount of equipment, of infinite variety. These roads would have made ideal strafing for Jerry . . . his lines were not far

away . . . but apparently Jerry was too busy with more important jobs for his dwindling planes. He seldom strafes our roads though we never hesitate to move anything in broad daylight.

One night while we were at Advance HQ they did do some sort of strafing. No one seemed too sure just what it was.

It was shortly after midnight. I had been asleep for an hour or more. Something wakened me . . . I had no idea what . . . I had no thought that anything unusual had happened. Then, Captain Frisbee, the General's Aide, came to my door and asked, "What was that?" Puzzled, I asked, "What was what?" He explained that there had been a terrific explosion . . . very near, he said . . . a great light had lighted up his room even though the blackout shutters were closed . . . then a plane had swooped low over the house, "within 100 feet." I confessed I had heard nothing. So back to bed he went.

In the morning, our enlisted men confirmed the Captain's story . . . the General said he too had heard it. We inquired at HQ . . . others had heard the explosion, had seen the light. None knew what it was . . . there was no evidence of any bombing anywhere near HQ . . . no guns had been fired.

The only reasonable explanations seemed to be that it must have been either a photographic ship that had released a magnesium bomb to light up the town and the HQ for a picture, or, a night raider who had just dropped a bomb and buzzed the town on his way home.

My "insomnia" seems to be getting worse.

In this area the heavy guns could be heard pounding away up on the sides of the "bulge." Planes flew over in great groups or in small formations of six or eight planes. Vapor trails crisscrossed the sky. (Vapor trails? Fast ships cause condensation of moisture in air, leave a visible trail of vapor.)

We returned to our main HQ. A few mornings later, we drove out to one of our fighter-bomber fields. Not many miles from HQ we passed a truck on the side of the road, burned almost to a crisp . . . part of the cab was all that remained. It was one of our own. Apparently it had been strafed and set afire during the night . . . it was still smoldering.

Five miles up the road we saw an airplane crashed in the field along the road. We stopped to examine it, for it was obviously a recent casualty . . . and it seemed to be scattered all over the landscape.

Some distance to the north, a line of trees followed the main highway . . . several of these had their tops clipped off, perhaps twenty feet or more . . . apparently cut by the plane when it plunged down to crash. Close by the line of trees was a small orchard. Small bits of aluminum "skin," segments of wire cables, small parts of instruments were strewn among the trees. More and larger pieces littered a wide path for another 150 yards . . . there the remains of the fuselage lay. Both wings were stripped entirely away . . . the nose was gone . . . the tail proper had been burned off from the end of the fuselage. Beside the remains of the tail, a pool of blood which had run down over ice for six to seven feet. A piece of skull . . . two by three inches . . . nothing more. Another 100 yards or so ahead an engine had come to rest, a few cylinders missing. Fifty yards from the fuselage we found a human ear . . . clipped off as though by a surgeon's knife. No other evidences of anything human.

A half dozen French peasants wandered over the area, curiously examining the remains. They said the plane had crashed during the night . . . they knew nothing of what had happened to the crew . . . it was a fairly large German plane with black iron crosses and swastikas . . . it must have had a crew of several men.

I've seen many crashed planes, but this was different from any I had ever examined. Judging from the way it was strewn all over several acres, it must have exploded in the air shortly before crashing. The small bits seemed to have been blown off before the bulk of the ship hit the ground. Perhaps the ship's bombs were hit . . . had blown the ship and crew to pieces.

We drove on to our fighter-bomber field. Our people there knew about this crashed ship . . . they said it had been brought down by anti-aircraft fire during the night. We wondered whether this was the ship responsible for our burned truck down the road.

Hardly had we arrived at the field when a heavy explosion let go. It seemed fairly close . . . men ran out from tents and huts to

see what it was. There was no answer to that immediately. Then we got word that a lone bomb had been dropped on another HQ some few miles away. That didn't seem to make sense, however. Later we heard that an ammunition dump had exploded . . . for what cause we didn't learn.

Planes were warming up to take off on missions . . . the front, where heavy fighting was taking place, was only ten to fifteen minutes away.

Several squadrons of fighter-bombers returned. With the C.O., we watched them come in, counting each flight to see if all had come back. This time they all came home . . . some had not even fired their guns . . . but their bomb racks were empty.

We met a young Lieutenant Colonel who had returned from a morning mission less than an hour before. Very simply . . . almost apologetically . . . he told us he had "finally" shot down his first enemy plane just that morning. I asked him how he "got him." His answer was, "I just got on his tail and let him have it . . . there wasn't much to it."

Overhead and in the distance the sky was strung with vapor trails. A dog fight had been in progress a short time before . . . we just missed it. They said, on the field, it was too hazy for them actually to see the fighting from the ground . . . the planes had been at considerable altitude. During lunch the air raid alarm sounded . . . but no enemy planes appeared . . . the alarm simply means enemy planes are in the vicinity.

We listened in on a briefing. This squadron was being given targets right in the "small bulge" . . . the terrain was explained, how to identify the target, what secondary targets to attack if, for any reason, the primary target could not be hit. The briefing over, the boys headed for their ships . . . we watched them take off and disappear. Fifteen to twenty minutes later the Heinies were unquestionably "catching hell."

We left and started home. We chose another road in order to drive through the town of Domremy (Domremy la Pucelle is the full name), where Jeanne d'Arc was born.

Domremy is a small village . . . like hundreds of other French villages . . . lying close to the hills west of the Meuse River valley . . . narrow, crooked streets . . . ancient stone houses . . . the inevitable manure piles in front of many houses. It is pretty country. The river itself is small . . . more like what we call a "creek" at home.

The house where Jeanne was born in 1412 still stands . . . an odd-shaped stone structure . . . its design somewhat like an oversized lean-to. A guide showed us the room where the Sainte was born . . . cold barren stone floors, but a sizable fireplace to kill the winter's chill.

Next door to her birthplace is the old church where she was christened . . . where she took her first communion. It has apparently been rebuilt, in part at least, and today it is attractively furnished, will seat perhaps 150 people. It was here on Christmas Eve that some of our officers and enlisted men attended midnight mass.

Just beyond the village is the comparatively new cathedral of Jeanne d'Arc. It is a striking edifice . . . sits high on the hillside, overlooking the broad Meuse valley. An elderly Belgian nun . . . a tiny wisp of a woman . . . escorted us through . . . showed us the Basilique. This is one of the most beautiful churches I have ever seen . . . modern in design, done with great dignity and restraint . . . around the walls are huge paintings (perhaps 12 x 30 feet each), depicting outstanding moments in the Sainte's life . . . her vision in the fields (the church stands on the spot where she had her vision), being presented to the King, her battle to relieve the siege of Orleans, being burned at the stake at Rouen.

Now that we are sightseeing, perhaps I should tell you a bit more about Cannes, and what the Riviera is like in wartime.

We flew down by way of Dijon, Lyon, and Marseilles. Weather was none too good the first part of the flight but after passing Lyon the clouds broke . . . we got a good view of the Alps with their snow-covered peaks and ridges . . . Mt. Blanc must have been among the



peaks, but we were too far away to be sure which was which . . . We flew directly over Marseilles, circled the harbor to get a better look . . . then turned east, out over the Mediterranean, up past Toulon and in to Cannes.

We put up at a good hotel right on the waterfront . . . the Air Forces have taken over some of these hotels as rest and recuperation spots . . . so it was very pleasant. But the weather was, for the most part, "lousy" (whether the Riviera Chamber of Commerce sues me or not). It rained, was chilly and gloomy. One day the sun did shine most all morning . . . but it ducked behind heavy clouds ten minutes after I parked myself on my balcony to sun myself.

Everyone . . . i.e., local residents, waiters, etc. . . . told us this was "most unusual," "you just missed the beautiful weather we have been having for weeks." That had a familiar ring to it . . . almost made me think I was back in the States . . . in Florida or California. I've been on the Riviera only once before . . . in January, 1919 . . . I heard the same stories then. So it is my personal conviction that while they undoubtedly do have some sunshine in mid-winter, it is uncertain and fairly chilly until later, perhaps until February or March.

Cannes itself is practically undamaged by the war . . . except that the sea walls have been torn up in places, huge pill boxes dot the waterfront . . . they said the beach was still thick with mines (we didn't try to prove it) . . . out in the water were the pilings which had carried mines on top, just as on the Normandy beaches.

Flowers were plentiful . . . it doesn't get cold enough to freeze . . . geraniums, roses, and of course palm trees line the streets and fill the parks. Grass was green. Behind the town rose the gray, barren hills . . . foothills of the lower Alps . . . far in the distance snow-capped peaks.

We drove over to Nice and on to Monte Carlo, or Monaco. Along the route were some evidences of bombings . . . bridges out, houses wrecked. At one spot a short bridge across a deep canyon had been blown out . . . probably by the retreating Germans. It had been repaired . . . but it didn't seem any too safe as we drove across its

temporary boards with only frail wood siderails, while the canyon yawned several hundred feet below.

This drive is beautiful. Skirting the shore line, it winds in and out and around . . . is practically chiseled out of the rock sides of the young mountains that run to the Mediterranean's edge. The red roofs and white houses among the green shrubbery give the whole area the atmosphere of an Oppenheim novel.

All military visitors were forbidden to Monaco . . . the Prince was rather "clubby" with the Germans while they were there, and now is trying to ingratiate himself with the Allies . . . even now the German lines are not far away . . . within "88-throwing distance" . . . so we had to get special permission to go there.

Monaco looks just as it did 26 years ago, as far as I could see. We drove about the city . . . visited the famous gambling Casino. It was open and the manager and commissioner took us through the entire establishment, showed us the Grand Ball Room, the special "private" gambling rooms, reserved for special parties, explained the games of "trente-quarante" and "baccarat" . . . we had a pretty good idea of our own how roulette works. They even took us to the cocktail lounge and bought us a drink. We did no gambling at the tables, as that is forbidden to men in uniform. But I did stick two or three of the little aluminum 1 franc pieces in a "one-armed bandit" slot machine standing in the lobby . . . so I "gamed at Monte Carlo."

I was especially interested in watching the gamblers. It was three o'clock in the afternoon and maybe the elite had not yet come in. But my impression was one of rather shabby elderly men and ugly older or middle aged women . . . intently they followed the rolling ball or watched the turn of the card, made penciled notes on their pads (everyone seems to work on his "system"). To me they were a pretty pathetic looking lot. Those "ravishing beauties" of Monte Carlo which novelists tell about? . . . well, maybe I just hit a bad day.

Leaving the Casino, we drove up on the Prince's promontory . . . visited his sizable aquarium . . . drove over to the Palace, an odd, ill-fitted assortment of buildings stuck together, stucco, stone, and wood. A gaudy, blue-red uniformed sentry with a shiny helmet stood

before his candy-striped box in front of the Palace . . . a "candy-soldier."

Of course Monaco, Cannes, Nice, and the entire Riviera are fantastic places. Doubtless they can be fascinating. I'd like to come back when times are more normal . . . when weather isn't "unusual."

So the month has gone. We've had some visitors here. Five-starred General Bouscat . . . head of the French Forces in the field . . . was here and we threw a dinner for him. Katherine Cornell, Brian Ahearn and Company came with "The Barretts of Wimpole Street," played here for a week. We had the entire cast in for lunch one day. Katherine is withstanding the years with a reasonable degree of success. General Valin, head of the French Air Force, paid us a call and we threw a dinner for him also.

Christmas and New Year's arrived as per schedule . . . special dinners each day . . . otherwise they were days like any others.

The German threats in their several break-throughs seem pretty well liquidated, but the war goes on. One guess seems as good as another as to when the end may be expected. You can get most any slant you want.

A week or so ago we interviewed three newly captured prisoners of war who had just been brought in to this HQ. They were a strange lot:

1. A thin-faced, bewildered, grayish man of forty-five . . . the "Caspar Milquetoast" type. Said he had been an actor until recently . . . he had had ten weeks in the Army . . . never been in a battle. As he put it, "They marched us several days . . . we slept in a barn one night . . . early the next morning the Americans came and took us." He showed no Nazi sympathies.
2. A small, shifty-eyed boy of twenty-four . . . dressed in a weird combination of loud checked coat which was too small for him, so it flared out over his hips, blue "plus fours" trousers stuck into his shoe tops. He said he had killed his officer in a quarrel, had been condemned to death, had escaped . . . he had gotten these clothes from some French people, thrown

away his uniform and come in to surrender to our troops. His story may have been true. He had no political sympathies that one could detect.

3. A young, blond Nazi Luftwaffe pilot. His eyes had the intensity of a zealot. He was militarily correct, surly. He had been shot down . . . his face was full of small cuts from flying glass when his canopy had been riddled with bullets . . . then he had bailed out. He would not talk.

Of such stuff is the German Army and Luftwaffe made. I don't know how long they can hold out. I do wish we would quit hollering about "Unconditional Surrender" and "complete dissolution of German industries" and similar "brave threats" made by people safe in the U.S.A. Even a rat will put up a terrific fight when he is cornered and sees no way out.

Why *must* we boast of what we will do *after*? Why can't we lick the enemy . . . disarm him . . . *then* do whatever is necessary to protect the peace of the future?

I won't pursue that argument . . . it riles me too much. One can't help but feel strongly when American boys are dying . . . when more will die . . . and you can't help but feel that careless boasting is aggravating the situation . . . boasting by those who won't share the danger.

The boys over here don't gripe about doing the job . . . tough as it is. But they want most of all to finish the job and come home. They don't appreciate anything that prolongs the struggles without serving any useful purpose.

Many of these boys have been over here two years or more. One of our officers pulled a wisecrack at lunch recently. Referring to another officer, he said, "He's been over here so long he's beginning to look like his identification picture." Could be.

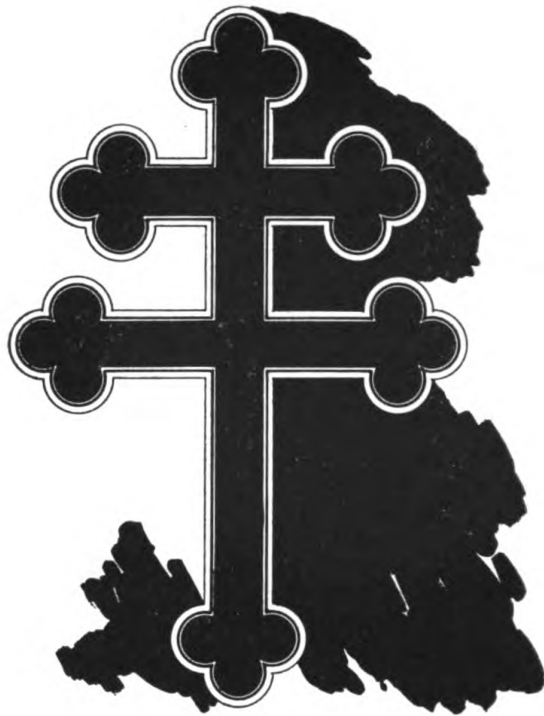
Sincerely,



P. S. Apparently I didn't make my "plea for letters" too clear when I wrote some time ago.

What I was trying to put across was that many boys over here are overlooked . . . they don't get letters from home . . . largely, I believe because folks too often feel they "haven't anything to write about." I wanted to urge, "don't fail to write for such reasons . . . you're wrong . . . anything you write is most welcome."

I wasn't griping on my own account . . . folks have been more than generous in writing me. Don't construe that as a reason for *not* writing me. But don't forget the boys you can write to more often.



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VOSGES

28 January 1945

Dear Folks:

Only two weeks have passed by since I last wrote you. But a move is imminent for us, and before that takes place I want to tell you of these recent days which have been full of activity . . . of the increasingly severe winter weather that has made all action more difficult and hazardous.

Snow has been falling almost every day . . . heavier falls than we had previously . . . the roads have been impassable at times . . . on the fighting front the men struggle through great drifts. Up in the Ardennes Forest they say there is as much as four to five feet of snow on the level. Some of our troops in the Vosges have been unable to use trucks . . . have been forced to carry up supplies on

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mule or horseback . . . in some cases even these have been unable to get through and the soldiers have carried their supplies on their own backs.

The cold has become more intense . . . below zero temperatures have been frequent here in our little valley, and to the north we understand they are catching even worse.

If one could only take a detached viewpoint, this is really beautiful winter weather . . . the kind of days I dreamed about as a kid . . . great white flakes whirling down into this white valley. But it is a nightmare for the boys who fight . . . who know no roof or shelter for days at a time . . . who struggle against this extra enemy of the elements. The French tell us they have not had so much snow here in years . . . only two winters like this during the past twelve.

In this French village the kids play in the snow in the schoolyards . . . women in wooden shoes wash clothes in community washtroughs of stone, arms bare to the elbows . . . their hands and arms red, for the water is icy cold . . . cheeks red with the permanent flush of cold. Kids run the streets with knees bare. How do they stand it? It would probably mean pneumonia for us if we did the same things.

We keep fairly comfortable in our HQ offices and in our quarters, though fuel does run out occasionally and our funny little stoves smoke with the contrariness of the wind. Sometimes the stoves backfire with a veritable "smokescreen" and we have to throw windows open to air out the rooms. The smoke and gas is annoying . . . it is a constant irritation to nose and throat and eyes . . . all of us have "permanent colds," I believe largely due to this smoke and gas irritation.

Our little movie house . . . we have taken over a small French civilian movie house . . . is a touch rugged, however. We can't get fuel for it, so it is entirely without heat. You can imagine what it is like . . . no heat all winter . . . day after day of near-zero or sub-zero weather. But the GI's still crowd the place, for there is no other place to go. They sit in heavy overcoats, sweaters, and heavy shoes. When we go, we usually wear flying boots and take blankets to wrap

up in. You have to be a real movie fan . . . or genuinely hungry for entertainment . . . to make it worthwhile.

But the war goes on . . . in the air and on the ground. Rarely do we have a full day of bright, clear weather . . . but parts of many days permit operations and when these hours come our bombers and fighters are out.

We have been hammering hell out of the Heinies in the Saar "bulge" . . . likewise the 9th Air Force and the 8th Air Force have been taking advantage of every good flying hour to plaster the enemy in the Belgium-Luxembourg "bulge" . . . we are ruining his trucks, tanks, railroads, gun positions, troop concentrations, and everything that shows up in the battle area. And the Heinie is retreating . . . it should not be too long before he is entirely eliminated from the territory he took with his push.

Up north of Strasbourg, as well as in the Colmar pocket, we have resumed the offensive and we seem to be having good success. Every bit of good weather helps tremendously.

Of course we are still very much aware of the enemy's ability to strike back, sometimes when least expected. We are still very much on the qui vive, as an incident here at HQ demonstrated a few nights ago. About two o'clock in the morning, a figure approached one of our guards in front of HQ. The guard called, "Halt!" The figure came on. Again the guard called "Halt!" . . . the figure did not stop. After the third challenge, without result, the guard fired . . . over the head of the figure. The man jumped behind a tree, trying to hide himself apparently. Then the guard let him have it, with his carbine . . . the figure fell to the ground.

With this of course other guards came. They found the "figure" was a French civilian . . . he had two bullet wounds through his shoulder and chest. He was taken at once to our hospital. Last reports are that he will recover.

Why the man was abroad at such an hour . . . why he did not stop at first challenge . . . why he tried to hide behind the tree . . . these are questions we have not had answered. But it certainly seems



strange that any Frenchman . . . after four years of German occupation . . . would not know enough to be most cautious when approaching an American HQ in the middle of the night.

Naturally we've been greatly cheered by the Russian advances of these last weeks . . . we've waited long for this. Their great gains of thirty, forty, or more miles per day . . . their rapid advances toward Berlin . . . make our gains seem almost insignificant. In fact, there is much kidding about it. We speculate on where we'll meet the Russkies. It is variously estimated that we'll meet them "down the road a piece" or "just over that hill." The General's driver wisecracked this morning, "A couple of Russkies showed up here this morning for sick call." But that's not sarcasm . . . it tickles us to have anyone beat hell out of the enemy, and fast . . . it helps bring the end sooner.

We are proud of what our Air Force is doing . . . day after day, in spite of this tough weather, the total number of sorties (i.e., number of planes actually attacking the enemy) has been increasing. Our boys are doing a swell job of forcing the enemy retreat across the Rhine.

Just a few days ago we learned that we shall soon receive orders . . . orders back to the States. This news comes with a mixed feeling on our part. Naturally we'd like to be in on the "kill" . . . for that reason we hate to think of leaving now. But it is tremendously inviting to contemplate being back home. And we do feel confident that the end is not too far away.

Last night the French officers of our HQ gave a farewell dinner for General Royce and a few of the rest of us who will return to the States with him. It was a lovely party, in the home of some fine French folks here . . . a home as modern and comfortable as one would hope to find in the States. And the dinner was excellent, in spite of stringent restrictions of food shortages which face all civilians . . . I suspect it was supplemented by some Army rations. General Gerardot, head of the First French Air Corps, was the ranking officer of our French hosts.

Yesterday at HQ, General Royce and I got to talking, like a couple of school kids, of what we would do first when we got home . . . what we wanted most of all. We even wrote down a list of things we have missed most over here. Here's the list . . . it may amuse you:

Orange juice . . . huge glasses of it, freshly squeezed and icy cold

Milk . . . great gobs of it

Coca-Cola

Ice cream

Bananas

Sliced tomatoes

Head lettuce

Oysters

Shrimp cocktail

Clam chowder

Strawberry shortcake

Haircut and manicure

Shower bath . . . with plenty of really hot water

Dick Tracy

Juvenile? Perhaps. But maybe that will give you an idea of what the States mean to a couple of old-timers who have been away. And I'll gamble that that list comes pretty close to what every soldier over here thinks of first when he knows he can really expect to be home soon.

It seems to me that these trivialities mean much more than just that. To me they symbolize the great difference between America and the rest of the world . . . they are an index of the far better standard of living which we Americans have enjoyed. The fine phrases of "liberation," "freedom," and so on are splendid. But unless they bring with them the little things . . . the things which mean genuine enjoyment of life . . . they can still be pretty empty.

January 29-31

On the morning of January 29th we did those last-minute things one does before leaving a post. Last of all, General Royce made a presentation of a number of Bronze Stars and a Legion of Merit to officers of this HQ who had done outstanding jobs in building up this Air Force and making operations a success during these past four months.

Our ship was waiting at the improvised airport. Heavy snows had hit us for several days past . . . all the day before and up until 4:00 o'clock in the morning the engineers had crews working continuously to clear the runway to make it possible for the ship to take off.

We drove to the airfield in brilliant sunshine, the reflected light from the snow was blinding . . . it was bitter cold. Snow lay three feet deep at the roadside. Just before we reached the field our driver made a sharp turn, just a bit too sharply . . . we slid off the road into a snowbank . . . we were stuck. We left the driver to go for help, and the General and I walked that last mile and a quarter through the snow . . . in short, we literally "walked out of the place."

In spite of all the work of the engineers it still wasn't too certain that our take-off would be easy . . . they had cleared a minimum space and the snow made the runway rough. But we had no real trouble, and soon were in the air.

This was our lucky day . . . the first day of good weather in almost a week . . . the weather held good and soon we sat down on a Paris airfield. Here we were to pick up the plane that was to take us across the Atlantic.

We drove in to town . . . to our "town house" of which I have told you before, for we had kept this place in Paris even though our HQ was in the Vosges. In our absence, two other American Generals occupied the place, holding it in readiness for us whenever we came to town.

Just before we reached the house we drove past the Invalides . . . here are the tombs of Napoleon, Foch, and a few other French heroes.

We stopped, drove back . . . to visit the place again as neither of us had been there since World War I.

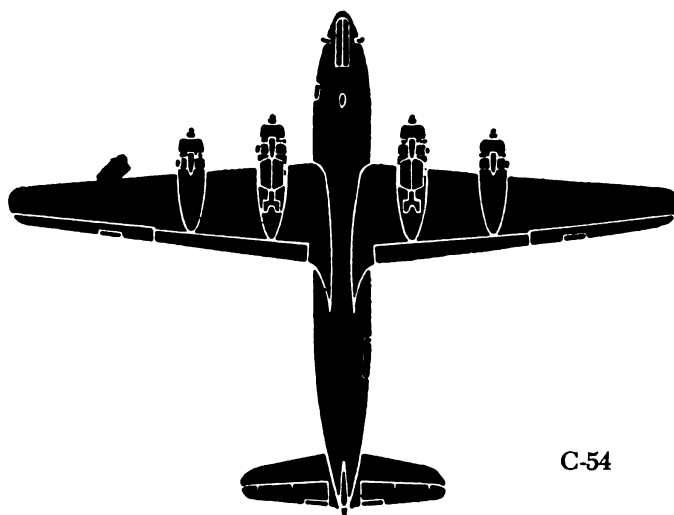
As we stood by the tomb of Napoleon . . . watching the line of American G.I.'s, WAC's, and French civilians file by . . . strange thoughts went through my mind. Today Napoleon is a French hero . . . the world comes to do him homage. Yet, wasn't Napoleon practically the Hitler of his day? . . . didn't he kill, burn, pillage, and enslave much as Hitler has been doing . . . until his final overthrow? What queer trait of human nature makes us revere such a man when he is long dead? Will the peoples of the world revere Hitler one hundred years from now? . . . simply because he gained world prominence . . . simply because he made a name for himself . . . a name that today is never uttered, outside Germany, without hatred?

History seems to prove that we, the average folks, are just plain "suckers" for those who get enough prominence . . . we seem to feel that they can do nothing really wrong. How many so-called "Great Leaders" take advantage of that human trait . . . to do just as they please, regardless of what suffering it brings to the people? Will wars ever cease as long as men can make themselves immortal by leading nations into war? It isn't a pretty thought.

For two days we waited for our plane to be ready. Paris was dreary . . . dirty, wet snow lay in her streets . . . her bare trees dripped with rain, fog, sleet . . . her beautiful boulevards were almost ugly with the barrenness of winter . . . her houses were cold, for fuel was almost unobtainable. No taxicabs were on the streets . . . they had been taken to Germany years before. The civilian population hurried along the streets in thin, worn clothing . . . a beaten people, not yet revitalized to the new life which Liberation promises them.

The third day our plane was ready. But low clouds, fog, and rain made take-off impossible. Better weather was promised for the morning of the fourth day, and early in the morning we drove to the airport. In the half-light of early morning Paris seemed even more dreary . . . so it was with a sense of relief that we looked forward to our departure. Aloud we expressed the hope that when next we saw

Paris there would be lights, heat, warmth, good food in the restaurants, taxis on the streets, and gayety . . . without them, Paris is not Paris.



February 1-2

At the airport all was in readiness, and soon we were off in the huge four-engined C-54 . . . one of those majestic **skyliners** which have revolutionized world air transport in but a few years. Our party of passengers was small . . . the ship's main load was **mail and express** for the States.

Early evening saw us approaching the Azores just as the last rays of the sun shot across these small islands. We landed, had supper, the ship was refueled and checked. Our plan was to come home via Miami. But high winds over the Atlantic in that direction forced us to change our route. Early evening saw us aloft, headed for Newfoundland.

Until midnight we read, played gin rummy. Then we turned in . . . if one can call it that. At any rate, we had mats and blankets which we spread on the floor of the ship. We shed our clothes, pulled on pajamas and made ourselves as comfortable as possible.

And it wasn't bad . . . that is, it was reasonably comfortable for a while. Then we headed into the edge of the "weather front" . . . the "front" which was causing the high winds to the southwest. The ship pitched and tossed . . . and we pitched and rolled with it. I happened to be in the rear of the ship where such turbulence makes itself felt most. For some three hours I "hung on" to the leg of a bench along the cabin's side to keep from being rolled off my mat. But we dozed and got some rest. Finally the air calmed somewhat, and we rested better.

Halfway between midnight and dawn . . . Newfoundland time (there is a 5-hour change flying from Paris to New York) . . . we saw the lights of an airport below us . . . our first glimpse of anything except sea, clouds, and moonlight sky, since leaving the Azores. Twenty minutes later we were over another airport. Here we were to make our first stop on the west side of the Atlantic. From 8,000 feet we looked down . . . glad to be across. Then the airport was blotted out . . . snow storms were raging below . . . they come and go in spells.

For twenty minutes we flew blind . . . again the airport lights showed. "Now," we said to ourselves, "we will land." But again the storm blotted out the lights below. For another twenty minutes or so we flew through the "muck." Again the lights appeared, only to disappear shortly. For a third time the procedure was repeated. Knowing nothing of what the pilot had in mind (he was up front and one doesn't bother a pilot at a time like this) we were puzzled . . . and by this time we were annoyed. "Isn't it possible to get into this airport?" "If not, why doesn't the pilot head for another airport, farther inland . . . instead of using up gas milling around in this muck?" We had already been in the air more than ten hours.

Then we sensed that the pilot was coming down to a lower altitude . . . finally we broke through the clouds . . . just below us we saw the water. Soon we saw shoreline ahead . . . we flew close along the land . . . ahead the lights of the airport appeared. Visibility was bad . . . no more than one-half or three-quarters of a mile in the snow

storm which still raged . . . the clouds were down to less than 500 feet. We approached the field . . . ready to turn for our landing, we thought. Then, suddenly, all four engines burst forth with the thunderous roar of full power, the ship's nose was pulled up . . . as though some tremendous power had given us a gigantic "boost" we shot up again into the "muck."

This was unpleasant . . . definitely. "Why?" "Had we been too low?" "Had we just missed a nearby cliff?" We couldn't tell.

Five minutes later we again broke out over the water . . . again we approached the lighted field . . . tensely we watched. Coming close to the field, the pilot suddenly "bent" the ship in a steep turn, headed down the runway . . . in a matter of seconds we were on the ground . . . the snow swirled crazily about us in the light.

The first audible thought came from one of our party, "I knew darned well these airplanes would never be practical." Silly? Of course. But a genuine expression of relief.

What we had not known . . . and how it would have eased our minds during that hour and a quarter over the airport, had we known . . . was what the pilot told us now. When we had arrived over the field, five other planes were trying to get down in the storm. It takes time to "talk down" a plane under such conditions. So, while the other five planes landed, we waited, "upstairs, in the muck." Then on his first approach, the control tower had ordered the pilot to change his landing runway just before he was ready to sit down . . . he had gone back up in a hurry to come in from a different direction.

Officers of the field met us . . . took us to the field's "hotel," a very pleasant hostelry built by our people to take care of transient VIPERS who may be weathered in. It was still black night . . . little more than 3:00 a. m. here. We washed up, shaved . . . even had a bottle of ice cold coca-cola.

The snow continued to come down. But with the plane refueled and ready to go, we piled in and taxied out to the runway. There we waited for a bit of a letup in the snow. After twenty minutes we grew tired of waiting and, with a slight lull in the storm, we took off .

and climbed up through the clouds. At 8,000 feet it was clear and cold, the moon and stars bright above us.

Dawn came . . . below the clouds broke up. Over Maine the weather was clear. Down across New England we flew in as fine a morning as a flying man could ask for. Two hours before noon we landed at LaGuardia Field, New York.

Believe me, it felt good to be home. Maybe that is getting to be "old stuff" to you folks . . . one hears it so often from returned soldiers. But it is a very real feeling to those of us who come back.

No, it isn't any great poetic exultation . . . at least it isn't to me. It is a lot of little things . . . aside from family and friends. It is the sheer joy of coming into a warm house . . . even if I haven't gotten used to the warmth of our houses, though I've shed the "heavies" I wore most all winter in the Vosges. It means no blackout . . . I still can't keep from wanting to pull down the shades when I turn on a light. Sudden noises or strange noises make me perk up my ears . . . until I remember they can't mean V-bombs or any kind of bombs, nor an air raid alert.

Speaking of warm houses, I'm reminded of a bit of humor which appeared in *Stars & Stripes* some time back. As the story goes, an American G.I. in England was griping about the atrocious weather. Finally an Englishman spoke up with, "I suppose that back in the States you never have any bad weather." "Oh sure," the G.I. replied, "we have plenty of bad weather at home. But we don't take it into our houses with us."

Not only in this matter of being comfortable, but in scores of other ways, our millions of American boys overseas are learning what America really means . . . they are learning to appreciate home as they never could have, had they not known what other countries are like. I'll gamble that those boys will agree with me that "there isn't anything very important which those countries have to offer those of us who are lucky enough to live in the U.S.A."

I'll make another wager . . . a good many millions of those boys won't want to listen to a lot of the propaganda which tries to tell us



we "should do thus and so because such and such a foreign country does it that way." Why should we ape them? . . . *they envy us* . . . and they have good reasons to do so. This bit of education is at least one good benefit we should derive from this war.

That's all for now. Later, when I know what our new assignment will be, perhaps I can tell you about that.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Put". The letters are fluid and connected, with a large initial "P" and a trailing flourish.



# 18

LOUISVILLE, KY.

10 May 1945

Dear Folks:

It hardly seems possible that more than three months have passed since we set our wheels down on LaGuardia Field, returning from France. The time has gone swiftly . . . for we have been busy and on the go most of the time, over these United States.

It is good to be back here . . . just how good I don't suppose any of the boys can really express, for it is made up of so many little intangible things that in themselves are trivial, but together make up what we call "home."

For weeks I gorged myself on orange juice, vegetable and fruit salads. Sure, meat was welcome . . . but even steak is not too great

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a treat, for we had good meat overseas. Even today I go for orange juice and fresh vegetables . . . and ice cream is still a treat.

It took me weeks to get used to turning on a light in the evening without first making sure that all "blackout" curtains were drawn. Sudden noises made me inquisitive . . . no, they don't scare one . . . you just have become accustomed to hearing everything and making sure what it is.

But one thing I have noticed that is still distinctly unpleasant to my ears. Last Saturday I was in New York. At 12:00 o'clock noon they tested their air raid siren . . . as they have been doing for years, I suppose. I knew what it must be. Still its undulating "woo-oo-oo-oo-woo-oo-oo-woo-oo-oo" was something that I didn't like. I wondered whether, if they had sounded it on an even tone . . . indicating "All Clear" . . . it would have annoyed me.

Of course, the first thing we wanted when we got back was to go home. And, as soon as we had checked in with Washington, I headed West to our place in the country . . . Allegan County, Michigan.

Here King Winter was still on the throne . . . much as I had left him in the Vosges Mountains. Several feet of snow covered the ground . . . it snowed the day I arrived . . . and the quarter-mile long lane from the main road to our house was snowed in . . . it had been snowed in for over a month . . . making it impossible to drive in. So we piled our baggage on a toboggan, borrowed from a neighbor lad, and pulled it down the lane. The car went to the village garage, a mile away.

Immediately I took up an intensive course in "settin" . . . and you can believe I enjoyed it. This was something I'd promised myself for a year and a half. It was good to be "snowed in" . . . to be isolated and have nothing to do.

But it didn't last long. Two days later we climbed on the "Mercury" at Kalamazoo . . . back to Detroit . . . for General Royce was to be married the next day to a Red Cross girl he met in Cairo. That was quite an event. And we brought the bride and groom back with us to KING'S X for a day before they returned to the East.

Then I took up my "settin" again. But only for another day or so, as I had to go to Chicago on personal business, and my leave was for a short ten days.

February 15th found me in Atlantic City . . . HQ for the A.A.F. Personnel Distribution Command . . . back on the job. This was General Royce's new Command.

What's the "Personnel Distribution Command"? That's what we wondered, too . . . we had heard about it overseas, but our ideas about just how it worked were pretty vague. So our first job was to be briefed on the PDC's mission and its operations.

I'd like to tell you about this "PDC." Frankly, when we returned from France . . . leaving the glamor and excitement of the combat theaters behind . . . we wondered whether any assignment in the States wouldn't be boring.

Well, this "PDC" handles all the returning veterans of the Air Force . . . naturally, that interested us. But before I try to tell you just what PDC does, and why, I suppose I should explain a bit of what these returnees are like . . . and how they get that way.

Of course you know something of what it means for our fliers to go out on combat missions. They not only encounter enemy aircraft and deadly enemy flak (anti-aircraft) . . . bad weather is one of the most nerve-racking enemies a flier bucks up against. All fliers hit it during their missions . . . sometimes it seems that lousy weather is always present. Even when they return to their bases not far behind the lines they are still subject to the annoyances of uncomfortable, cold quarters . . . and the constant threat of enemy bombing attack. Even though such raids are few, there is always the tension . . . an unrealized anticipation of possible attack. One becomes sensitive to every sudden noise . . . a backfiring truck in the middle of the night will raise many a man from his sleep until he satisfies himself it really was a truck . . . and nothing more.

And these tensions are shared by the ground crews, the airport engineers, and other service troops close behind the lines. Often they live and work under shell fire. Experience soon teaches them that their own planes sometimes make errors and drop bombs in the wrong

places . . . sometimes on our own troops. So, even our own planes going over . . . though they may be high and unseen above the clouds . . . keep them on the qui vive by the heavy roar of their engines.

Obviously such service . . . under such hazardous and trying conditions . . . has its effect on troops.

Of course the human mind and body can stand a great deal. Moreover, our medical men tell us, our minds and bodies are like batteries . . . they can be run a long time . . . and, if before the point of complete exhaustion is reached, they can be relieved, they can be renewed and recharged . . . by rest, a change of environment, a change of activity . . . by comfortable living conditions and good food far from the scene of battle.

"Combat fatigue" is what our Army "Docs" call this. And our Air Force medics are constantly on the alert to detect its symptoms. When a soldier shows such signs he is sent back for rest and rehabilitation . . . to recharge his mental and physical batteries.

This whole subject has interested me intensely ever since I worked with a Medical Board early last summer at HQ 9th Air Force in England. We examined combat crew members sent back for "fatigue." These boys were the worst cases. They had flown many, many missions . . . some had been wounded . . . practically all of them had seen friends shot down in ships close to them, or had their own crew members wounded or killed by flak.

Some of these boys came before our board in highly nervous states . . . hands would twitch . . . knees would not stay quiet . . . some of them could not sleep, or their sleep was a torture of horrible dreams of experiences they had been through.

It was heartbreaking to listen to these boys . . . they had suffered the tortures of hell . . . they had proved their courage under the most dangerous, trying conditions . . . yet their greatest worry was that they thought they had failed. They seemed to feel that now, since they could no longer take combat, they had proved to be cowards. They wanted to go back to combat . . . even though that was what they feared most . . . and they knew they were no longer capable of carrying on.

Perhaps you'll remember my writing about these cases in some of my letters last summer. As I said, these were the worst cases . . . some men have far more nerve-racking experiences than others . . . some can take more than others. Of course these men . . . as well as all others showing any signs of "combat fatigue," even in mild form . . . were sent back for rest.

Also the Air Force has worked out a system of rotation whereby those men who have been longest overseas are returned to the States for rest, recuperation, and a change to duty under less arduous conditions.

Well, that's the overseas side of it . . . that's what happens over there. Over here it is the job of the PDC to do something for these boys . . . to do whatever needs doing so they can be "decompressed" from the tensions they built up during their intensive training and their combat experiences.

So, at Atlantic City, which was then the main HQ for the entire Command, we first spent two days being "briefed" on PDC activities. Then a week later we started out to see some of the Command's installations. We spent eight days on this flying trip . . . and it was a flying trip in more ways than one. For in those eight days we visited Convalescent Hospitals and Redistribution Stations at Louisville, Kentucky, Santa Monica and Santa Ana, California, Denver, Colorado, and Overseas Replacement Depots at Sacramento and Salt Lake City . . . approximately 8,000 miles of flying, in addition to inspecting the installations at all of these points.

A few days later we flew down to Miami Beach to look over our huge installation there . . . here alone our Command occupies some fifty of the largest hotels. On the way back we visited St. Petersburg . . . we have the Don Cesar Hotel there . . . and another Overseas Replacement Depot at Greensboro, North Carolina. The next week we drove up to Pawling, New York, to see our Convalescent Hospital there. (These hotel installations are exceptional . . . most of our convalescent camps and redistribution stations are in the cantonment-type wooden barracks buildings.)

Now I can almost hear you asking, "Well, what *do* you do for these boys when they come back?"

Since I've been back I've read a lot of magazine and newspaper articles about "How to handle the returned veteran" . . . and I've listened to a lot of folks talk about it. I've even been given some of this "prescribed treatment" myself.

And I hope you won't think I'm completely balmy when I say I think that most of what I've read and heard . . . and been "treated with" . . . is a lot of hooey.

For I've gathered the very definite idea that our folks at home feel these boys are some sort of "freaks" . . . or they are a bit "tetched in the head." Tons of paper seem to be wasted telling our people they must handle these boys with kid gloves . . . treat them like children . . . or as inmates of an institution.

I believe I speak for the boys who come back when I say . . . all the boys want is to come home, to find their friends, to rest, to enjoy again the things that make these United States the best place in the world. Don't look at them queerly . . . don't treat them as something out of a sideshow.

Sure, these boys are tired . . . they are "fed up" with war . . . "fed up" with lousy weather, with cold, uncomfortable quarters . . . "fed up" with the strange ways of foreign peoples . . . they are hungry for the special food delicacies they have long been denied, such as orange juice, good milk to drink, ice cream, fresh vegetables.

But, barring those exceptional cases where they've had extreme experiences . . . those seriously wounded or those who have seen too much horror too long, and the latter are not numerous . . . they are NOT psychopathic or neurotic. Those who are suffering from such tragic aftermath are taken care of in special hospitals . . . you won't be meeting them in your daily contacts.

Sure, all the boys need a careful medical check . . . some will need a fairly long period of rest and recuperation under ideal conditions . . . but sooner or later practically all of them will take over new duties and regain all of their old energies and enthusiasms.

So these are the things the PDC gives them. Here, briefly, is how it's done:

Before the returning Air Force man ever sees any of our installations, he is met by one of our liaison officers as he arrives in this country . . . whether by boat or by plane. And the first thing arranged for him is that which he wants most . . . a 21-day leave to go home and visit his folks. This is arranged as a "delay en route" . . . a delay en route to his first station which will be one of our Redistribution Stations nearest his home.

His leave over, the returnee reports to one of our Redistribution Stations (we have five of these . . . at Atlantic City, Miami Beach, Wilmington, North Carolina, Santa Monica and Santa Ana, California). His first experience is that of living in exceptionally good quarters, compared to what he's been having . . . of having the best of food served to him for every meal . . . all the milk and ice cream he can take . . . great gobs of fresh orange juice, thick, juicy steaks, lots of fresh vegetables.

He stays here ten days to two weeks. Most of these days are his own . . . to do as he wishes . . . he can bring his wife with him . . . but a few hours each day are devoted to:

- (a) A complete physical checkup . . . including a check for any latent diseases he might have contracted, such as malaria.
- (b) A "briefing" . . . or orientation . . . on what has been going on in the U.S.A. while he has been away. This isn't propaganda . . . but facts. He is told of unsavory things such as strikes . . . but he's also told about the tremendous achievements of American industry and business in the war effort, in building the World's Greatest Navy and Greatest Air Force and Best Equipped Army, as well as supplying our Allies with untold quantities of Lend-Lease goods.
- (c) A check of his personal affairs . . . with competent legal advice and help . . . his income tax, his insurance, or any other matters which may be bothering him.



- (d) Bringing his Army affairs up to date . . . very importantly, any back pay he may have coming is paid to him.
- (e) Finally, his next assignment is discussed with him . . . his experiences analyzed . . . and he is sent to that particular job where his talents and his overseas experience can be of most value in training other men or strengthening our air force in the States.

Some cases, of course, require rest and rehabilitation before assignment back to active duty. Some men, because of injuries or wounds, will not be able to return to duty . . . these are returned to civil life AFTER they have recovered as fully as possible.

Those who require more care are sent to our so-called "convalescent hospitals" . . . of which there are twelve . . . located at Plattsburg and Pawling, New York; Macon, Georgia; Wilmington, North Carolina; Miami Beach and St. Petersburg, Florida; Fort Thomas and Louisville, Kentucky; San Antonio, Texas; Denver, Colorado; Spokane, Washington; and Santa Ana, California.

I said "so-called convalescent hospitals" . . . for these are not hospitals as we usually understand the word. We have to call them hospitals, under Army Regulations, in order to get the furnishings and equipment necessary. But actually these places are combinations of sanitarium, country club, and technical school. Our Air Force men come to these "hospitals" from our Redistribution Stations, or from General or Regional A.F. hospitals as soon as they are able to walk or their wounds have healed.

Those who need exercise to bring back strength to atrophied muscles find that our Air Force Doctors have invented remarkable contraptions to suit their special cases . . . in fact, these hospitals have a veritable battery of "Rube Goldberg" contraptions to suit all sorts of problems.

But such treatments are the least important part of what goes on here. Our Docs and psychologists work on the principle that a busy patient . . . one who keeps himself occupied at something in which he has a genuine interest . . . is one on the fastest road to com-

plete recovery. Never must a patient be permitted to lie on a cot and count the nails in the ceiling.

So at each of these rest and recuperation places we provide an infinite variety of things for the patient to do . . . each fellow selects what interests him most. The only requirement is that they DO SOMETHING for at least five hours each day.

The range of activities offered these boys is really amazing. They can take their pick of such things as:

<i>Horseback riding</i>	<i>Baseball</i>
<i>Golf</i>	<i>Repairing radios</i>
<i>Volley Ball</i>	<i>Swimming</i>
<i>Handling cattle or pigs</i>	<i>Handball</i>
<i>Tennis</i>	<i>Raising chickens</i>
<i>Squash</i>	<i>Training dogs</i>
<i>Drawing, painting, sculpturing, courses in history, languages, math, building model cars, airplanes, and so on.</i>	

And this *works*. During these past months I've visited most of our installations and have seen these boys at work and at play. Most all of them go back to full duty within six weeks to two months.

I am sure that this work does far more than just recondition men for more duty. Many, many thousands of boys are learning that the Air Force is seriously interested in them not only for military service but to fit them better for civil life later. This, I am convinced, will help tremendously to maintain the Air Force we shall need after the war . . . and to make better citizens for our country. (Incidentally, did you notice that President Truman has recently asked for a full report on this A.F. rehabilitation work, with the thought that it may be made a model for all other services to follow . . . i.e., ground and service forces, perhaps Navy also.)

That's the story of our Personnel Distribution Command. The only thing I have not mentioned is our work in sending men overseas to replace the men who come home. We have two such Overseas Replacement Depots . . . at Greensboro, North Carolina, and at

Salt Lake City. Of course the work at Greensboro is now falling off while that at Salt Lake is speeding up rapidly. And we are activating another O.R.D. at Sacramento, California.

V-E Day has changed our situation greatly . . . increasing our work many-fold. Of course we've anticipated this . . . our plans have been under way for months. But now we have to put them into effect. That will mean more "Convalescent Hospitals" . . . more facilities at our Redistribution Stations . . . more personnel to handle our greatly increased flow of men back from the European Theater. Several of these hospitals have already been selected . . . our Command is growing every day.

But before I drop this whole subject I want again to stress a point that is becoming almost a fetish with me . . . namely the way all of us treat these boys who come back.

Let me emphasize . . . these returning veterans are normal, healthy lads . . . some of them are injured or wounded . . . practically all of them are "fed up" and tired . . . but they are not freaks nor are they neurotics to be treated in strange fashion.

I heard a story the other day . . . a true story . . . which I think tells a lot:

One of the boys from a small Pennsylvania town had been over in the South Pacific for many long months. One day his folks received a letter from him saying he was sending home a sketch which he wanted them to keep for him.

Knowing that he had been in many strange places, they imagined he must have picked up some Oriental sketch of some kind . . . for the boy had no small amount of artistic ability.

The picture came . . . they opened it. To their amazement it was the boy's own drawing of the rather tumbledown railroad station in his own home town . . . which he had sketched from memory far out in the South Pacific.

To me, that boy is typical of all American boys. No matter where they may have been . . . no matter what their experiences . . .

what they want most is to come back home and find the things they've been dreaming about while they've been away.

Let's be natural with them . . . welcome them back . . . and make them feel AT HOME.

In April, our main HQ moved . . . from Atlantic City to Louisville. And this brought some headaches, primarily in trying to find someplace to live. For Louisville has jumped in population from something like a quarter-million before the war to approximately a half-million now.

So we descended on this critical housing situation with our main HQ personnel of 800 to 1,000 people. It has been a mad scramble. Many of our people aren't settled yet. I finally found myself a "rabbit hutch" ten miles out in the country. It isn't bad . . . just a little three-room cottage . . . but it has the essentials. Best of all, it promises to be as cool a place as one can find when hot weather really hits. The Louisville people have been most cordial and helpful . . . that has made a tremendous difference in handling this tough housing problem.

Meanwhile, I keep traveling a good deal. My job is that of Public Relations Officer and it is proving most interesting. Not only do we have the usual magazine and newspaper stuff to do . . . we also have several programs on the air over national hook-ups. As you can guess I'm getting a kick out of having something to do with telling the public to "lay off" treating our returned boys like freaks . . . to remember that these boys are real guys who want to be treated like human beings.

Before moving to Louisville I took a bit more leave, as I had taken only ten days when I came back from overseas, and we are supposed to have twenty-one days as returnees. Our boy, Dick, had just finished his aerial gunnery course at Panama City, Florida, and he had a two-week furlough. So we all met in Chicago and then went over to our place in the country . . . to KING'S X, in Allegan County, Michigan.

This was in late March . . . the weather was wonderful. Days were warm and bright . . . temperatures in the 70's most of the days.

Of course the snow was gone . . . some buds were showing . . . the woods were dry.

But the unseasonal weather backfired. One afternoon the phone spread the alarm, "Forest fires are threatening the schoolhouse and several homes."

A half-mile from our house the woods were afire . . . fanned by a near-gale of wind . . . a nasty grass and underbrush fire . . . not enough to burn the trees but enough to take any house in its path. Men, women, and children with shovels and small chemical apparatus had the flames pretty well under control here, so we drove on toward the schoolhouse, several miles away through the woods.

Between the flames and the schoolhouse stood a heavy brake of underbrush . . . the flames hit this, and the crackling mounted to a roar as they swept through. The wind shifted suddenly . . . the smoke, fumes, and heat almost suffocated us before we could raise a hand. The fire reached the road alongside the schoolhouse . . . jumped it . . . soon the entire building was a mass of flames.

We moved back to the next house, directly in the path of the oncoming fire. But we couldn't approach the flames. Then the wind shifted again. With shovels we beat out the fire, gaining space here and there until a line was drawn about the house . . . beat out the flames creeping up the side of a shed . . . and the fire passed by.

More and more firefighters arrived . . . plus apparatus from nearby towns . . . as we drove home to supper.

A bite to eat and we went back. The night sky was red . . . the whole countryside seemed aflame . . . great clouds of whitish-gray smoke climbed high in the light of a full moon. The firefighters had the situation in hand . . . counter fires had been started . . . watchfulness through the night and the next day prevented further damage. But already several homes had burned, as well as the schoolhouse. And some 10,000 acres had been burned over before the last flames were extinguished.

It was most impressive to me. I've seen numerous forest fires in the West, but always from a distance. Never before had I realized how vicious these outbreaks could be even here in Southern Michigan.

But I must tell of one incident. Ewing Graham happened to be visiting with us and, when we returned to the fire in the evening, he and our son Dick left to go up the road for a closer look-see. We told them we'd expect them back in a half-hour.

An hour went by. We searched up and down the roads . . . called out . . . but found no sign of them. Finally, about midnight, we went home. A half-hour later they came tramping in.

Where had they been? Oh, they had spotted a state police car directing the firefighting . . . it had a two-way radio . . . had chiseled a ride, and for three hours had been racing up and down the country with the state cops.

Ewing has threatened me with all sorts of dire vengeance if I tell that story . . . but I can't resist. After all, don't many of our leading citizens . . . like "Little Flower" LaGuardia and Jack Mehan . . . chase fires?

My leave over, I received word to join the General in Miami Beach. So, Holobein and I took the airline and flew down from Chicago. There we managed to do a little swimming and sunbathing. One day we went out in one of the deep sea fishing boats which are maintained by the Air Force . . . to give the convalescent boys a treat of this sport. It was a swell day . . . and our luck was good. Our party caught three sailfish . . . all approximately seven feet long, weighing forty-five to fifty pounds. As for myself, I got a tan.

These recent weeks have certainly been full of action . . . the President dies, Mussolini is killed, Hitler and his gang disappear or die . . . Germany surrenders. V-E Day didn't mean much to us, for it had been so long anticipated . . . and the several false starts took the edge off any excitement we might have felt. We worked as usual. In fact, Army rules required us to stay at our HQ or be at our quarters all of V-E Day and night . . . apparently lest some of the boys stir up trouble celebrating. It seemed an unnecessary precaution.

It is hard to realize that war in Europe is at an end. But there seems to be an entirely new atmosphere over the country wherever I go . . . a new atmosphere of optimism and hope.

Yes, we still have the Jap war to finish. If I had to prognosticate, I'd say this may end sooner than the experts predict. Why? Primarily because Japan never bargained for a single war with us or with anyone. She attacked only when she thought the world was too pre-occupied to do anything about her.

Now the fall of Germany must be a terrific psychological blow. Moreover, Japan faces us alone . . . as well as anything which Britain and Russia may do.

Of course, I know nothing of what our strategy may be . . . factors unknown to me may dictate a slow development of our attack. But if we really go after them, my feeling is that Japan can be forced to give up before 1945 ends.

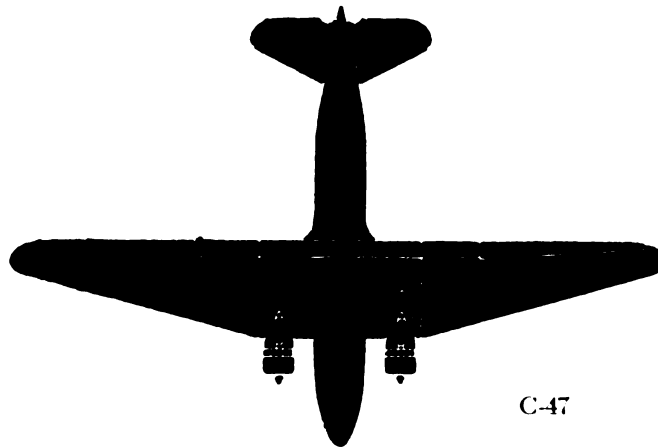
What's your guess?

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Put'.







C-47

Two thousand copies of this Limited Edition, designed by Merle Armitage, have been printed by the Standard Printing Company. The text is set in 12 point Caledonia type, and printed on Lexicon Antique book paper. The maps, title page eagle and chapter head decorations were painted and drawn by P. G. Napolitano.

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Sincerely,

RUSSELL L. PUTMAN  
Lieutenant Colonel  
Air Corps.

Autumn, 1945



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(Arabic name plate of Colonel Putman)

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